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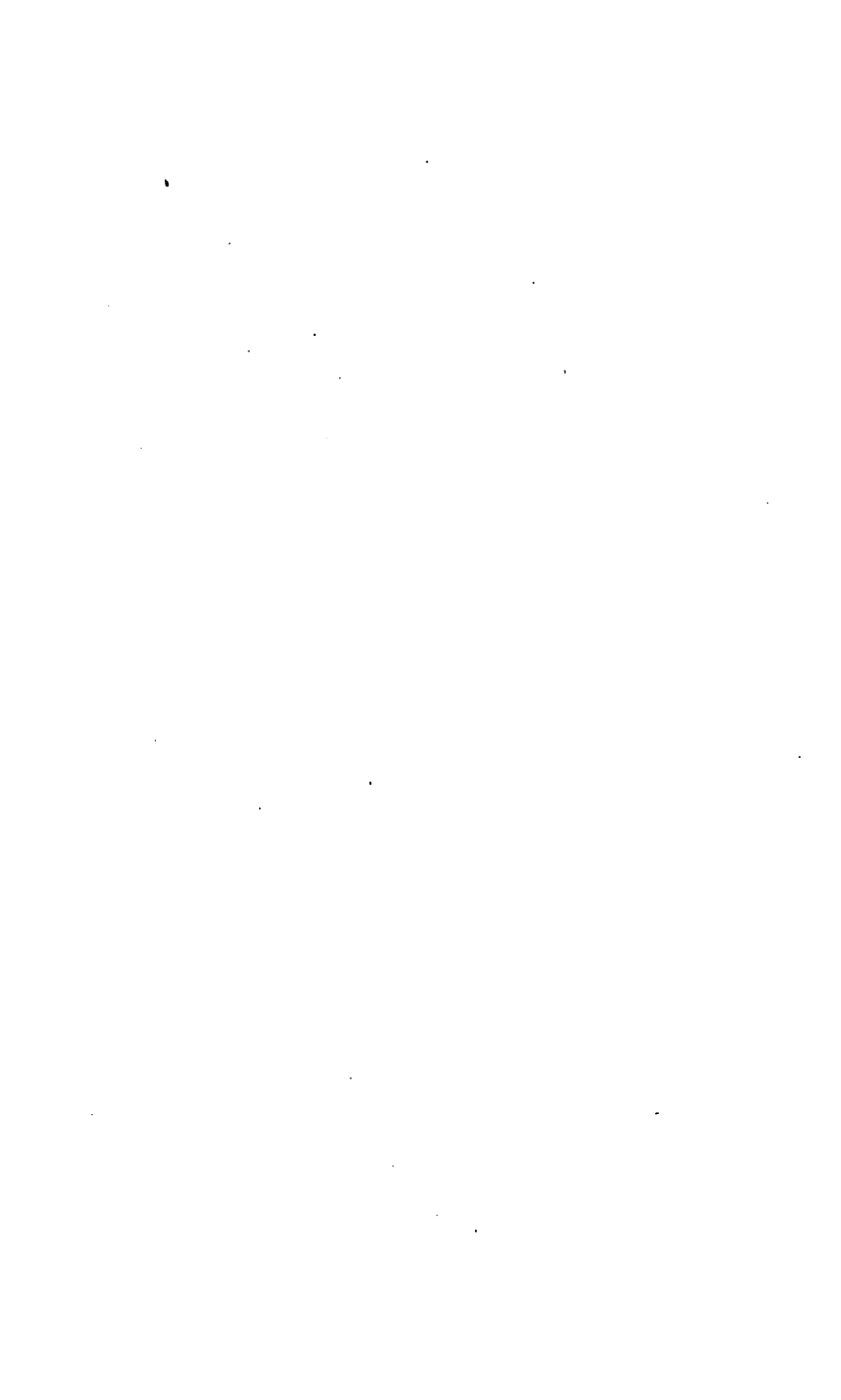
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FOUR PHASES OF MORALS.



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FOUR PHASES OF MORALS.



*"Thou art NEAR, O Lord; and all thy commandments are TRUTH : concerning thy testimonies I have known of old that thou hast founded them FOR EVER."*

PSALMS OF DAVID.

# FOUR PHASES OF MORALS

SOCRATES, ARISTOTLE,  
CHRISTIANITY, UTILITARIANISM.

BY  
JOHN STUART BLACKIE, F.R.S.E.  
PROFESSOR OF GREEK IN THE UNIVERSITY OF EDINBURGH



EDINBURGH  
EDMONSTON AND DOUGLAS  
1874.

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1874

TO

SIR HENRY HOLLAND, BART.,

M.D., D.C.L.,

PRESIDENT OF THE ROYAL INSTITUTION OF GREAT  
BRITAIN, ETC. ETC.

DEAR SIR,—As the substance of this book was originally delivered in the form of Lectures before the Royal Institution, London, I was naturally led, in giving my notes a more exact expression and a larger illustration, to do so in connexion with your name—a name which, besides its official significance in all that concerns the Albemarle Street Institution, was recommended to me by that remarkable combination of rare experience of life, enlightened scholarship, and various knowledge of men and places, which, more than the greatest metaphysical acuteness, or the most extensive academical learning,

enables a man to be a sound judge of those important practical questions with which the science of Ethics is occupied. As by the arrangements of the season—1869—of which my course formed a part, the number of Lectures was limited to four, and as I determined to treat the subject in the concrete historically, rather than in the form of abstract discussion, it necessarily happened that the four phases of morals to which I specially directed attention, viewed in reference to the whole system of ethical doctrine, presented an incomplete and fragmentary aspect. I endeavoured however, under these limitations, to bring forward those historical manifestations of moral truth which both afforded a ready occasion for discussing some of the most fundamental questions of Ethics, and, from historical and local considerations, were most fitted to be presented to a British audience at the present day. At the same time, there runs through the four discourses a unity of thought and tendency beyond what the title indicates, and which those who are competent to judge will easily recognise. Hoping that you will find nothing in this book but what has



been “attained with honesty, and maintained with moderation”—the test of excellence in such matters which yourself have wisely indicated,—and that you may be able to accord to these Discourses in their written form some portion of that approbation which your presence conferred on their oral delivery,

I am,

DEAR SIR,

Yours, with sincere esteem,

JOHN STUART BLACKIE.

UNIVERSITY, EDINBURGH,  
*October 1871.*



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## SOCRATES.

AS there is no country which can boast the honour of possessing more names of a world-wide significance than Greece, so among those who hold this lofty position there is no name superior to Socrates, concerning whom the Delphic oracle in ancient times, and a great utilitarian authority in modern times, agree in testifying that he was the wisest of the wise Greeks.<sup>1</sup> And though stout old Cato, in ancient times, as Plutarch informs us, gruffly enough expressed his opinion that the son of Sophroniscus was a pernicious old babbler, whose breath was justly stopped by the cup of hemlock which he drank for his last supper—in harmony with whom the benign old dogmatist whom the modern utilitarians revere as their patriarch declares that Socrates and Plato wasted their lives in talking nonsense under the pretence of teaching philosophy,<sup>2</sup>—yet these negative utterances, few and far between, against the fair fame of the father of moral science, have died away almost as quickly as uttered, and are now no more heard in the grand organ-swell of the general admiration of more than two thousand years.

<sup>1</sup> See the splendid eulogy of the philosopher in J. S. Mill's essay "On Liberty."

<sup>2</sup> See the famous sentence in the Deontology (vol. i.), which a man to believe must have seen,—so gross is the amount of ignorance, conceit, and dogmatism that it parades without a mask.

Unquestionably if there be any name, after the great Founder of the Christian faith, which is entitled to claim the title of a preacher of righteousness for all times and all places, it is the name of Socrates; and it is with the view of bringing his high merits in this respect before the general public, in as easy a way as is consistent with scholarly accuracy, that I have undertaken to write the present paper.

The subject is one peculiarly attractive to a thinking man, not only on its own merits, but because of the ample and thoroughly trustworthy materials which we possess for forming a correct judgment. We are not here, as in the case of Pythagoras, sent to fish for fragments of truth among fanciful writers who lived several hundred years after the death of the object of their transcendental laudations; but, as in the gospel history, we have to deal with the intimate disciples and daily companions of the great hero of the story. We gather our knowledge of the life and philosophy of Socrates from Xenophon and Plato, both of whom have reported their intercourse with the philosopher in a tone of mingled admiration and sobriety which leaves no ground for suspicion. Only with regard to Plato we must take with us this caution, that he was both a poet by temperament and by mental habit a system-builder; and, as he chose to set forth his own speculations in a series of dramatic dialogues wherein Socrates is the chief speaker, we must beware of accepting, as standing on one common basis, the facts with regard to the life of Socrates brought forward in these compositions and the doctrines which are put into his mouth. With regard to the former, we may accept Plato's evidence as a contemporary authority with the

utmost confidence; with regard to the latter, we must be constantly on our guard; and indeed, according to my view, it is wise never to accept any statement of Socrates's doctrine from Plato, of which the germ at least does not lie plainly in Xenophon. For Xenophon, just because he was a less original man than Plato, a pleasing and graceful writer, somewhat on the level of our Addison, was for that reason free from the temptation, or rather had not the capacity, to interpolate anything into his account of the philosopher which was not consistent with the actual fact. He was a plain man, with no theories to support, and no pretensions to maintain; and as a faithful contemporary recorder of what he heard and saw, a more capable and trustworthy witness could not be desired. We shall therefore draw our sketch of the life and sayings of the great Athenian preacher mainly from his pleasant little book, introducing the idealist of the Academy only where he cannot be suspected of using his revered master as a mere dramatic engine, or where his superior literary powers have enabled him to paint a more effective picture.

The age of Socrates was the age of Pericles, the culminating epoch of Athenian glory; he was contemporary with Euripides, Sophocles, Herodotus, Thucydides, Hippocrates, Democritus, Anaxagoras, Aristophanes, Phidias; but, while he shared all the elevating influences of this ascendant age, growing with its growth and blossoming with its blossom, he was not spared the sorrow of quitting the scene beneath the first dark shadows of its decay. That military ambition which is as much the besetting sin of democracy as of autocracy, had precipitated the Athenians, during the latter part of the fifth cen-

tury before Christ, into a distant expedition which crippled their energies and exhausted their resources ; all this, and certain violent revolutionary changes which arose out of it, Socrates had to live through, till at last, a few years before his death, he saw the pride of Periclean Athens laid prostrate at the feet of Lysander and the rude oligarchy of Lacedæmon. He was born in the year 469 B.C., eleven years after the naval battle of Salamis which freed Europe for ever from the apprehension of Asiatic servitude, exactly at the time when the brilliant but sober policy of Pericles commenced its long period of happy sway over the fortunes of the Athenian state. At this time Simonides and the other great poets who had seen and sung the glorious victories of Marathon and Salamis were swiftly departing from the scene ; but the memory of those patriotic achievements still burned vigorously in every Athenian breast, and conspired, with the birth of new and ambitious intellectual aspirations, to surround the youth of the philosopher with an atmosphere the most favourable to social and intellectual progress. The importance which the achievements of the democracy at Marathon and Salamis gave to the middle and lower classes of society at Athens, broke down the barriers which ancient aristocratic exclusiveness might have raised against the pretensions of mere character without position ; so that Socrates, though the son of a stone-cutter, and not, like Plato, drawing his blood from the old Attic aristocracy, seems to have found free entrance into the society of the most distinguished public and literary men of his age. His mother, as he himself took care to inform the world, was a "right worthy and worshipful



*μαῖα*," or lady-obstetrician ; a " wise woman," as the French say, in matters where it seems most natural that women should be specially wise ; her name was Phænarete ; but in social position, according to our aristocratic way of talking, she was nobody. What Socrates's own profession was, or how he supported himself, a very important point in the history of all public men, we unfortunately do not know exactly ; that he practised stone-cutting in his early years is not improbable ; and this may have given rise to the belief mentioned by Pausanias, that a group of the Graces at the entrance of the Propylæa was his work ; but there is not the slightest indication either in Xenophon or Plato that he continued to practise this art, or any other art, in after life. He had therefore no profession ; and, as he made no money by his philosophy, we must believe that he had been left some small competence by his father, or some relation, on which he was content to live. That he was extremely poor we know, both from Xenophon and from his own account of himself before the jury at his trial. We know also that his habits of life were remarkably plain and frugal, that he required little money, and coveted none. That he was in a position to have made money if he had chosen there can be no doubt ; but he expressly states that he had relinquished all projects for increasing his income, in order that he might devote himself without distraction to the great work of his life. However, with his philosophical notions about mere external grandeur, he seems to have been rich enough to live comfortably with a wife and family. This wife was the noted Xanthippe, not always the most pleasant companion, and, perhaps not altogether



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## SOCRATES.

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vision of his eyes; and as to the prominence of these his organs of vision, this was a manifest excellence even more than the conformation of his nose, inasmuch as it enabled him to look, not only straight before him in the way that most eyes do, but sideways also, and almost all round, so that he could see when no one suspected him of looking at them.

him. But it was not only his general oddity, his pleasant humour, and his wisdom seasoned with salt that made him a noticeable man amid the brilliant society of Athens: he was moreover a thoroughly healthy man, of great powers of endurance, a valiant soldier when his country required his services, and a good bottle-companion when piety towards Dionysus, or any occasion of social festivity, according to Attic usage, demanded that men should drink largely. On these points we have a graphic picture put by Plato into the mouth of Alcibiades, which, to complete our personal portrait here, it will not be amiss to translate.

"When we were together in the campaign at Potidæa, and I messed with him every day, I found that in the power of enduring toil he surpassed not only me but all the soldiers in the camp. For when, as sometimes will happen on the march, we might be at a loss for a dinner, Socrates could always fast with the least complaint; while, on the other hand, at our banquetings and junketings he always enjoyed everything in the most hearty way; and when he was forced to drink, even though not willingly, he could drain cup for cup with the stoutest bottle-companion in the camp; and, what is strangest of all, even after our stiffest bouts no one ever saw Socrates drunk. And as to cold and frost, I remem-

ber well, one night in one of those severe Macedonian winters, when there was a very biting frost, and every man either stayed within or went out well encased in warm sheepskin jackets and felt shoes, Socrates alone went about in the open air with no other covering than his common mantle, and trod the frosted ground with his bare feet more lightly than others did with their warm shoes. But I must tell you something more notable of his doings at Potidæa. One morning he went out early to indulge some contemplations; but not succeeding, as it would appear, in his object, whatever that might be, he remained standing and looking right out before him till it was near mid-day; and then the soldiers began to notice him, and said one to another that Socrates had been standing there in a brown study from sunrise. Thereafter some of the Ionians about the evening, after supper, took their quilts and carpets out, for it was then mild summer weather, and, shaking them on the ground, slept in the open air, keeping an eye at the same time on Socrates to see whether he would remain all night standing in that reverie; and when they awoke in the morning with the sun, lo! Socrates was standing in the same spot; and, after saying a prayer to the sun, shortly retired. So much for his contemplative oddities; but it is only fair that I should tell you how he was as good a soldier as a sophist, and could achieve no less notable things with his hand than with his head. For when the battle took place, for my conduct in which the generals gave me such honourable marks of distinction, I, who knew the real state of the case, insisted that if any man had distinguished himself in the fight it was Socrates, to whom on that occasion

I should willingly resign the intended laurels. But though this was quite true, the judges were inclined to favour me; and Socrates came forward and asserted with the greatest emphasis that my claims were superior to his; and so I carried off the reward of valour which none but he could with perfect justice claim. Then again when we retreated from Delium, after the defeat I was riding off on horseback, while Socrates and Laches followed, as hoplites, on foot, and coming up to them I cried, Fear not, good friends, I will keep alongside of you and defend you from the pursuit. On that occasion I admired even more than at Potidæa the conduct of this man; for while both were in danger of being overtaken it was manifest that Socrates during the whole retreat displayed far more coolness than Laches, who was by profession a soldier. . . . Instead of hurry and trepidation we saw in him only the large full eye that with wise wariness turned to this side and to that in a fashion that seemed to say to all comers that they would find a steady nerve if they came within sword's length of him. And thus he got out of the rush safely; for so I have always observed that in a retreat the men who are most afraid always fare the worst. And many other things there are I might relate, which would show clearly what a strange and truly admirable creature this Socrates is. Individual persons, behaving in individual cases as excellently as Socrates, it might be easy to point out; but such a compound, a thing in the shape of a man so utterly unlike any other man, you will find nowhere, either among famous ancients or illustrious moderns. One might make an adequate portraiture of Achilles, or Brasidas, of Pericles, or



Nestor, or Antenor, and other famous characters ; but such a unique mortal as this son of Sophroniscus no man can describe, unless, indeed, he chooses to steal my simile, and say that he is a Silenus superficially, both in his appearance and in his talk, but to those who look deeper his soul is a shrine of most excellent, beautiful, and worshipful divinities."

This passage will make it plain that Socrates was no mere idle speculator or subtle talker, such as might be found in ancient Athens or in any modern German university by scores—but a practical man, and an effective citizen of prominent merit. But if he showed courage in the field of battle not inferior to the stoutest and coolest professional soldier, he displayed a civic virtue on other occasions, which only the fewest on all occasions have been able to exhibit. This virtue was moral courage ; a quality which, when exercised in critical circumstances, raises a man high above the average of his kind, whereas with mere physical courage he is only a more cool and calculating rival of dogs and cocks and tigers, and other ferine combatants. On that memorable occasion, when the whole of Athens was fretted into a fever-fit of indignation on account of the neglect of the dead and dying slain by the victors at Arginusæ (B.C. 406), and in the torrent of what appeared to them most righteous wrath, were eager to overbear all the customary forms of fair judicial trial, Socrates happened to be serving as one of the senators whose duty it was to put the question to the assembly of the people in the case of great public trials ; and, a motion having been made that the generals who were guilty of the alleged neglect of pious duty should be condemned to drink the hemlock, and have their pro-

perty confiscated, it fell to the senators to perform the preparatory step in the prosecution. But as the proceedings in the case had been dictated by violent excitement, and were decidedly illegal, Socrates refused, in the face of violent popular clamour, to have anything to do with the matter, and lifted up his single protest—one amongst fifty—against violating the sacred forms of law at the dictation of an excited populace. On this, as on other similar occasions when he came into collision with the public authorities, he maintained a truly apostolic bearing, using in almost identical terms the language of the apostles Peter and John, when they were forbidden to preach by the Sanhedrim: "*Whether it be right in the sight of the gods to hearken unto you rather than to the gods, judge ye; but as for me, I have sworn to obey the laws, and I cannot forswear myself.*"

With all this faithfulness, however, in the public service, Socrates was very far from wishing to be what we call a public man; on the contrary, he kept himself systematically out of places which were eagerly coveted by less able men, and refused to have anything to do with the party politics of the day. This withdrawal from the service of the State, to the majority of Greeks, with whom the State was everything, could not but appear strange, and tend to increase their prejudice against philosophy and philosophers. But Socrates acted here, as in all other matters, with admirable good sense; he felt that to be a politician and a preacher of righteousness was to combine two vocations practically incompatible; for the popular measure which it might serve the immediate need of the political man to advocate it might not seldom be the first duty of

the moralist to condemn. Besides, if he took office with men who habitually acted on principles of which he could not but disapprove, he would be forced to waste his strength in a fruitless opposition to measures which he could not prevent ; and in this way it came to pass that, while he utterly disapproved, in the general case, of a good citizen, whether from the love of selfish ease, or from false modesty, or from moral cowardice, refusing to take part in public life, in his own particular work he felt that political activity would be a hindrance, and that it was his duty to abstain.

In these few paragraphs are summed up all that from indisputable authority we know of the personal history of the greatest of heathen preachers. The circumstances connected with his death are too closely interwoven with the character of his teaching to be intelligible here. We shall therefore enter now directly into a short exposition of his ethical teaching ; after which we shall be in a condition to consider with an intelligent astonishment how it came to pass that the preacher of the noblest doctrine that Athens ever heard, before the preaching of Paul on the Hill of Mars, after living in high repute and popularity for seventy years, should at last have been made to quit the scene of his moral triumphs, publicly branded with the stigma which was wont to be attached to the lowest of malefactors and the vilest of traitors.

The two first questions to be asked with regard to any great moral or political reformer are—What had he to reform ? and then, In the work of reform who were his antagonists ? The first of these questions is answered intelligibly and plainly enough in

the current knowledge of every schoolboy, that Socrates brought down philosophy from heaven to earth, or, as Cicero has it more fully in the Tusculan questions, "*Socrates primus philosophiam devocavit e cœlo, et in urbibus collocavit, et in domos etiam introduxit, et coegit de vitâ et moribus, rebusque bonis et malis quærere.*" Now there cannot be any doubt that, both relatively to the time and place where he taught, and absolutely for all times and all places, Socrates by this step did one of the highest services to human progress. By a natural vice of the human imagination we are led to seek in the misty distance for some pleasant excitement to thought, while neglecting the direct lessons of familiar wisdom from things under our eyes, which appear contemptible only because they are common. We attempt ambitiously to measure the remote movement of the spheres, and to note their imagined music, before we have brought any order or harmony into the daily course of our own lives; we climb all the highest mountains in Europe for a fine prospect, when there is likely a much better one to be enjoyed not five miles from our own door. In obedience to this tendency of the human mind the early philosophy of Greece was occupied principally (not altogether certainly, for Pythagoras was a great moralist) with cosmical and metaphysical speculations which amused the fancy and raised interesting and puzzling problems for thought, without any valuable practical result. When Thales, for one, said that the first principle of all things was water, he enunciated a great truth; it is true that wherever there is life there must be humidity; with dryness dwells only dust and death and frost. But this was a truth

leading to no applications; it could neither purify the wells nor improve the wines; no man would be the better in his body or his soul for formulating a cosmical generality of this kind. And if Heraclitus, the sombre sage of Ephesus, advanced a step further in a true generalization, when he said that fire or heat is the fundamental force which makes water possible, as modern chemistry has amply demonstrated, this doctrine did not advance human nature one step either towards outward comfort or inward satisfaction. And of what avail was it to tell men, as he did, that "all things are in a perpetual flux," if he did not teach them how to regulate that flux in the flow of their own lives, and to prevent the tidal currents of their soul from getting into a plash and jabble of conflicting waters in the navigation of which no seamancraft could avail against miserable shipwreck? More useless still was it to assert, as Anaxagoras is reported to have done, that the sun is a large mass of glowing stone or metal, so many times bigger than the earth—a proposition which, if it were true, would not teach a poor cowering savage to kindle a stick fire, nor make one olive-tree brighter with blossoms that promised a purer and a richer oil; while, if it were not true, then the whole of your lofty heliacal philosophy is only a blaze of lies. The whole history of modern science, indeed, before the establishment of the close and cautious method of experiment introduced by Bacon, shows that all physical inquiry starting from unproved assumptions, and ending in sweeping speculations, is only a sublime sort of idleness, and a procreation of cloud-phantoms. Socrates therefore acted wisely for his own time and place in saying to a people fond of

curious subtlety and unfruitful speculation, Let us have done with this lofty-sounding but essentially hollow talk about sun and moon and stars, and let us know something certain, and do something useful. This we shall achieve if we keep within our own lower sphere, and attend to our own work as men ; let us order our houses well in the first place, and after that concern ourselves with the order of the universe ; if, indeed, this does not rather belong to the gods, who may safely be left to do their cosmical work quietly, without any Anaxagoras or Archelaus to tempt with adventurous guesses the principles of their administration. Such was the thoroughly practical, and, if you will, thoroughly utilitarian tone which, taught by Xenophon, we justly view as the starting-point of the Socratic philosophy. And there can be no doubt man is so essentially a practical animal, that if even the accurate and curiously verified physical science of these latter days were as destitute of social applications and as barren of practical results as Greek science was in the days of Socrates, nine hundred and ninety-nine persons of those who now delight to dabble in chemistry and geology would leave these interesting sciences to the few men of a purely speculative character with whom mere knowledge is loved for itself. But when by geology we are enabled to unearth coals and gold, and know where to sink wells much more certainly than by the mediæval magic of the divining-rod ; and when by chemistry we improve our stores, bleach our clothes, purify our infected chambers, and dye our cloth with hues of which even the most skilful of the lichen-gatherers in the Highland glens never dreamt—then, to use a bookseller's phrase, you are

sure to interest a large public. But there is another view of the case, which places the Socratic philosopher on a much more lofty and honourable pedestal. For notwithstanding all the surprising discoveries and brilliant achievements of modern physical science, it must still remain true that

“The proper study of mankind is man,”

and that no kind of knowledge ever can surpass either in interest or importance the knowledge of man as a social being, as the member of a Family, of a Church, and of a State. The depreciation of moral science which we have lately heard from Mr. Buckle and other members of that school is a transitional phenomenon arising out of the one-sided culture of the understanding, and a defective emotional, volitional, and imaginative organization. If new discoveries are not every day trumpeted in the domain of moral philosophy, it is just because this science, like Euclid, is too certain, too fundamental, and too indispensable to have been left to the happy chance of being found out after the lapse of long centuries. Morals are as necessary to the acting man as the sun's light to the growing plant; they are not discovered, because they always have been and always must be; and the only great result that we have to look for then in them is that they shall be more universally recognised, more scientifically handled, and more practically applied. Socrates therefore was right, not only for Greece in the fifth century before Christ, but for England at the present moment, and for all times and places, when he proclaimed on the house-tops that the first and most necessary wisdom for all men is not to measure the stars, or

to weigh the dust, or to analyse the air, but, according to the old Delphic sentence, to know themselves, and to realize in all the breadth and depth of its significance what it is to be a man, and not a pig or a god. And in attaining this knowledge, while he would certainly find that, though a stable physical platform to stand on and a healthy physical atmosphere to breathe are necessary for the production of a normal humanity, yet in general the measure of a man's manhood is to be taken not so much from what he attaches to himself from without as from what he brings with him from within.

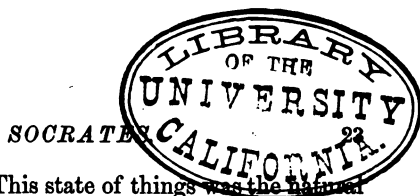
"The kingdom of heaven is within you" is a pregnant Socratic maxim as well as a profound evangelic text, and, in reference to our present subject, simply means that, while the most brilliant discoveries of physical science only minister to our comforts, our conveniences, and our furnishings, moral science alone can teach us to be men; for we are men by what we are, not by what we have. Gas-pipes, and water-pipes, spinning-jennies, steamboats, steam-coaches, submarine telegraphs, photographs, oleographs, oxyhydrogen, blowpipes, and the thousand and one devices for using and controlling nature which we owe to advanced physical science, may adorn and improve life in many ways, may multiply production of all kinds infinitely, and facilitate the diffusion of intellectual as well as material benefits; but they have no originating power in what is highest; they can create neither thought nor character; they are the most useful of ministers, but the most unmeaning of masters. And there can be little doubt that, if Socrates were to rise from the grave at the present moment, while, with his strong



common sense and keen eye for the practical, he would joyfully recognise all the wonderful material progress of which England and America make their boast, he would not the less feel himself constrained to utter an emphatic warning against the danger of estimating our national grandeur by the visible pomp of gigantic machinery and complex apparatus rather than by the invisible power of noble purpose and lofty design.

Such was the attitude of Socrates to the great teachers who since Thales downwards had preceded him in leading the intellectual advance of the most intellectual people of the ancient world. He stood forward as a teacher of moral science, as a preacher and philosophical missionary also; for in morals, the separation of theory from practice is an inconsistency of which only a feeble and imperfect nature is capable. Who, then, and of what quality, were his antagonists in the great regenerative work which he undertook? Not so much the physical philosophers, who might still pursue their researches or pamper their imaginations in their own speculative corners without disturbing the busy world, except in so far as they now and then might come into collision with theological orthodoxy, but the great untrained mass of the people themselves, and the pretentious array of a class of men who put themselves forward as their instructors,—the famous SOPHISTS. The word Sophists signifies professors of wisdom, in which sense Lucian calls our Saviour τὸν ἀνεσκολοπισμένον ἐκεῖνον σοφιστήν—that crucified Sophist—because He came forward as a public instructor professing to teach men wisdom. But as wisdom is a vague word (in fact σοφός in Greek signifies *clever*, and even

*cunning* as often as *wise*), we must consult the circumstances of time and place to know what it exactly meant in any particular instance. The generation immediately preceding Socrates, when the Sophists first became prominent, was the era of the great Persian wars, and of the notable uprising of national spirit and of popular power which that memorable struggle called forth. How fiercely the strife between the old aristocratic and the new democratic element in Greek society had been raging in the immediately preceding epoch, the poems of Theognis may serve sufficiently to indicate; and now that by the battle of Salamis the political importance of the middle and sub-middle classes had been blazoned forth before universal Greece in glowing characters, the democracy in great commercial cities like Athens at once started into an attitude of hitherto unsuspected significance. New aspirations had been created, new pretensions were put forth, and new guides were required for a large class of people who felt themselves as it were suddenly shooting up from pupilage into majority. Now what guides had a people, circumstanced as the Athenians then were, to look to for direction? The Church in those days—if we may call it a Church—was not a teaching body; its moral efficacy was exercised through sacred ceremonial and pious hymns; its intellectual agency was almost null. And though gymnastics and music, including a certain amount of the most popular literary culture, were common, there were no institutions like our Universities, for the severe and systematic discipline of the thinking faculties. A cry went up from the heart of the people for prophets to enlighten them; but there were no schools



of the prophets. This state of things was the natural soil from which a class of self-constituted popular teachers would grow up; and these teachers were the Sophists. And if we ask further in detail what they taught, the answer will be furnished from the same sources that explain their existence. As the democracy brought them into existence, the demand of the democracy would be the measure of the kind and quality of the article which they were expected to supply; and the article which a democracy demands for the use of its public spokesmen is always the same,—a certain practical knowledge and shrewdness in the conduct of affairs, a certain ready sympathy with popular prejudices and passions, a certain superficial dexterity in argument, and above all, a fluent and effective style of popular oratory. To supply these wants the acceptable teachers of the people would require to profess a knowledge of the great leading principles of law, a familiarity with political forms and the best methods of controlling masses of men into habits or fits of co-operation, a practical command of logic, so as to be able to turn the point of an argument, or entangle in a net of subtleties an inexperienced jury, and, as the crowning accomplishment, a faculty of speech, alert and unscrupulous, which might never lack a shift to give plausibility to a bad case, and should ever be ready to confound, overwhelm, and dazzle where it was hopeless to refute. Now it is easy to perceive that the lessons delivered by the professors of this wisdom, however acceptable to clever and ambitious young gentlemen eager to enter upon the arena of public life, could not, in the nature of the case, be conceived in any very exalted tone of morals or be framed so as to inculcate the formation

of any strictly honourable rules of conduct. The Sophists were mere tradesmen ; they were paid for the furnishing of a certain article, and they had to supply that article, of the quality and in the way and manner which might be most agreeable to those on whose patronage they depended. They were therefore, as Socrates constantly pointed out, the slaves of the parties by whom they were paid ; and if what their employers wanted was the show of wisdom rather than the substance, a ready command of words and arguments in preference to an earnest and severe search after truth, it was not to be expected that the majority of them would give themselves much concern to inculcate a severer wisdom. Tradesmen are seldom found acting upon principles which have a direct tendency to frighten customers from their shops. Not that there was anything necessarily bad or immoral in the profession or teaching of a Sophist ; some of them, evidently, such as Protagoras and Prodicus, even on the witness of their great adversary Plato, were very proper and respectable gentlemen ; few of them, perhaps, grossly immoral ; and with those of them who, like Gorgias of Leontium, confined themselves strictly to the teaching of the rules of pure rhetoric and elocution, no fault could justly be found any more than with Quintilian among the later Romans, or Principal Campbell of Aberdeen among ourselves. But it is plain, from the very nature of the case, that the Sophists, so far as they went a step beyond the province of strict rhetoric, were placed in a position which rendered their moral and philosophical teaching a matter of just concern to all who were interested in the education of the youth of Athens, and in the

character of her public men. Besides, among an impressible and excitable people like the Athenians, fond of display, and ambitious of popularity, the mere methodized art of talking, apart from any solid knowledge, and without any high moral inspiration, was a very dangerous engine to put into the hand of ambitious young politicians. And the fact unquestionably is, according to the concurrent testimony of Xenophon, Plato, Isocrates, Aristotle,—in fact, of all antiquity,—that these public teachers generally did dispense very shallow and often very dangerous doctrine. They were the natural birth of an age of movement and innovation; and in such an age, along with much that may operate as a healthy stimulant to progressive thought, there is always present a drastic admixture of the merely analytic, sceptical, and destructive element, a negative force, strong to impugn the validity of ancient foundations, but weak to establish anything equally stable and effective in their place. By the negative and sceptical teachings of these men, Socrates found the youth of Athens shaken from their old moorings, and tossing about amid seas of perplexing doubt on the one hand, and unprincipled libertinism on the other. Every great principle of social order and human right that formerly had been received from venerated tradition, and believed by the co-operation of a healthy instinct with a hoary authority, was now denied; and the field was waiting for the appearance of a great constructive prophet, who should bring people back through steps of scientific reasoning to a living faith in those maxims of immutable morality which they had originally inherited with the blood from their fathers' veins and the milk from their mothers' breasts.

Such a great prophet now appeared, and his name was Socrates.<sup>1</sup>

We have now clearly before us the battle-field in which Socrates had to appear, and the opponents with whom he had to contend; we see also the cause for which he had to fight. This was nothing

<sup>1</sup> The reader will not suppose that we have penned the above sentences about the position and character of the Sophists without having seriously weighed the evidence on the subject, and especially without having taken into account the very able chapter on Socrates and the Sophists in Grote's History of Greece. On the contrary, we have read that chapter carefully over several times, and have on each occasion returned from the perusal with the confirmed conviction that the learned author wrote it as a special pleader rather than as an impartial historian, and that the light in which he presents this important subject is essentially false, and distorts, or rather inverts, the real position of the principal figures in the picture. The main features in Grote's account of the matter are that the Sophists are a much calumniated class of men; that Socrates was the head of that class, rather than their antagonist; and that not the real facts of the case, but the imagination of the transcendental Plato, and the caricatures of Aristophanes, carelessly accepted as true history, have been the sources of modern ideas on the subject. In all this we think Mr. Grote is decidedly wrong, running counter at once to the inherent probabilities of the case, and to the unhesitating and concurrent testimony of all antiquity. The hollowness of the case of Mr. Grote has been shown in detail by Mr. Cope in the Cambridge Philological Journal and by myself in the Transactions of the Royal Society of Edinburgh; so that we may content ourselves here by simply stating what appears to be the *rationale* of the process by which the distinguished author of the History of Greece was led into the maintenance of such an untenable position. Now the influences which acted on the learned historian's mind in this matter seem reducible to three—(1.) Mr. Grote is characteristically a polemical historian; from beginning to end of his book he has in his eye, and is writing against, a class of writers who had made it a business, in writing the history of Greece, to write against the Athenian democracy, and through that, against democracy in

less than the establishment of a firm philosophy of human life, a sure guide for human conduct, and a strong regulator of society. The way now lies open to inquire what special doctrine he taught in order to achieve victory in this struggle ; and a careful perusal of Xenophon's book, which we regard as the

general. With such a literary mission, Mr. Grote, however triumphant in the main, was constantly exposed to the strong temptation of vindicating characters that had been previously abused, and abusing those whose respectability had hitherto stood unquestioned ; (2.) In the course of his sweeping progress of knocking down old ideals and setting up new ones, no figures were more likely to call his chivalrous faculty of vindication into play than the Sophists ; for they were, as we have seen, the natural guides of the lusty young democracy, and as such the special favourites of a historian whose business it was to justify and glorify the Athenians in all the characteristic phases of their social and political life. And to a certain extent no doubt the distinguished historian was right in maintaining that the antagonists of Socrates were not so black as they had been painted by many, but represented a considerable element of civic worth and respectability. But he was certainly not justified in wiping out that antagonism altogether from the record,—an antagonism which was just as marked in Athens as that more famous one in Jerusalem four centuries later, between the Scribes and Pharisees and the first preachers of the Gospel. The manner in which Mr. Grote endeavours to confound Socrates with the herd of Sophists, from the mere external resemblance of the weapons which they used, is unworthy of a great historian. It was enough that such a confusion should have blinded the eyes of the Athenian vulgar, and their great jest-maker Aristophanes, without being made at this time of day to serve as a serious vindication of the great mass of Sophistical teachers ; but (3.) Mr. Grote was led to elevate the Sophists, and so, comparatively, to degrade their great antagonist, not only from his position as the champion of Athenian democracy, but from his sympathy with the philosophical principles of the Sophists, as opposed to those of Socrates and Plato. These principles are those of the Sensational as opposed to what is commonly called the Ideal or Intellectual philosophy, the philo-

only safe authority in the matter, leads to a generalized statement of the Socratic moral philosophy, comprised in the following two propositions :—

(I.) Man is naturally a sympathetic and a social animal. He has, no doubt, strong, self-preserving, self-asserting, and self-advancing instincts, which, if left without counteraction, would naturally lead to isolation or mutual hostility, and ultimate extermination ; but these instincts of isolated individualism are met by yet stronger instincts of sympathy, love, and fellowship, in the ascendancy of which the true humanity of man as distinguished from tigerhood and spiderhood consists.

(II.) Man is naturally a reasoning animal, and is only then truly a man when his passions are tempered and his conduct regulated by reason. The function of reason is the recognition and the realization of truth ; truth recognised in speculation is science ;

sophy which gathers its conclusions exclusively from what is external, while looking with suspicion on any categorical intuitions, God-given instincts, or God-seeking aspirations that may assert themselves from within. With this temper Mr. Grote is naturally led to take the part of those ancient Greek teachers who held similar principles ; and these are to be found not on the side of Socrates, Plato, and Aristotle, but on the side of Protagoras and the Sophists. How strongly his speculative tendencies gravitate in this direction the learned historian has amply shown in his book on Plato, a work in which the reader will more readily find an eager and acute advocacy of the adversaries of Plato than an intelligent and loving estimate of the great idealist himself. In expounding Plato Mr. Grote put himself pretty much in the same position that Voltaire would have done had he undertaken to write a commentary on the Gospel of John. It is not enough, in order to see a thing, that a man have sharp eyes ; he must have a soul behind the eye, to teach him both what is to be seen, and what it signifies when it is seen.



truth realized in action is a moral life and a well-ordered society.

These two propositions may appear to many persons now-a-days to contain nothing that is not very vague and very cheap; nevertheless, when looked into accurately and followed out unconditionally, they lead to most important practical consequences; in fact, while their consistent assertion under all circumstances necessarily leads up to a noble and a heroic life, their habitual denial as necessarily leads down to a base and a brutish life. Let us look at them therefore sharply in detail.

The first proposition, as the reader will readily perceive, is levelled directly against the selfish theory of morals which was advocated with more or less openness by many of the Greek Sophists, and was prominently put forth in this country, as is generally known, at the time of the great Civil War, by the celebrated Thomas Hobbes of Malmesbury. That stout speculator, in his treatise on "the Philosophical Elements of a True Citizen," lays it down with a distinctness which admits of no qualification, that "all society is either for gain or for glory; that is, not so much for love of our fellows as for love of ourselves;" and again, a few pages further on in the same treatise, he puts forth the famous dictum that "the natural state of man is a war of all men against all men." Against such a one-sided, unhuman, unworthy, and altogether false assertion, Socrates comes armed, not only with the whole force of a sympathetic, a social, and a benevolent nature, but with that healthy instinct and practical good sense, which in him was prophetic not so much of his immediate disciple Plato as of his great successor Aris-

totle. In one of the conversations of the *Memorabilia* of which the subject is *φιλία*—a much wider word, let it be well noted, than the English “friendship,”—Critobulus, one of the young followers of the philosopher, is introduced as lamenting over the difficulty of making friends; and the views of Socrates follow in reply. We extract the whole passage:—

“What perplexes you, my young friend, said Socrates, seems to be that you have frequently seen even the best men, and of the most noble quality, quarrelling with one another, and fanning themselves into hostility, even more fierce than that which divides the most worthless members of society. Just so, said Critobulus, and not only this, but the best-ordered societies, and those States which seem to possess the most delicate sense of public honour, are often found to plunge into the most unjustifiable wars. Where, then, shall we find a place for social sympathy and true friendship? If the bad by their very nature cannot know what love means, if betwixt the bad and the good there can be no fellowship any more than betwixt fire and water, and if finally the good, who practise virtue most severely, in the ambitious contests of human life are still found for the most part envying one another and hating one another, among what class of men, I ask, are fellowship and good faith possible? But, said Socrates, this is by no means such a simple matter as you seem to think. Nature here as elsewhere has two sides. There is naturally implanted in men a social and sympathetic element; for they naturally need one another, and feel for one another, and help one another by co-operation; and alongside of this there exists also an element of hostility; for wherever a

great number of persons find their affections fixed on the same object, which they cannot all enjoy, opposition and war in reference to that object will naturally ensue. Hence strife and wrath and the passion for aggrandizement, and feelings of envy and dislike toward those who in the great competition of life are more successful than ourselves. Nevertheless, so strong is the sympathetic principle in nature, that it penetrates through all these barriers, and joins in bonds of brotherhood all the noble and the good."

This passage deserves special prominence in every estimate of the philosophy of Socrates, not only on account of its own strong practical good sense—a leading quality of the philosopher's mind—but on account of the complement which it supplies to the other part of his doctrine, that virtue is practical reason. How true this doctrine of rational morality is, and how comprehensive, we shall endeavour to show immediately; but in the first place, before applying reason to the actions of a social being, we must postulate the existence of a sympathetic instinct, without whose impulsive and attractive power reason could never be induced to exercise itself in any social direction. To prove to a man who has no love in his nature that he ought to love his neighbour, and that without such love no society is possible (a proof by the way which Hobbes leads very triumphantly), is all very well as a piece of reasoning; but it could lead to no practical consequences if the person to whom it was addressed was root and branch made up of pure selfishness. It would be like arguing to a tiger that it should become a lamb. In all moral questions, therefore, the motive powers must be sup-

posed as a fact; they belong to the nature of a moral being as steam belongs to a steam-engine; and therefore Socrates, whose whole teaching breathes the earnest conviction of the great truth that moral philosophy has no meaning as a theory, but exists only as a fact, is everywhere exhibited as a great lover of men. Love of his kind, indeed, was the main inspiration of his life, as in fact it must be that of all men who aspire to the noble position of social reformation in any shape; therefore it was that he was seen constantly in the streets and in the market-places, and in the public shops, and the *ateliers* of the sculptors, and in festal and convivial celebrations of all kinds; therefore it was that he professed himself on all occasions *μάλα ἐρωτικός*—a passionate admirer of everything beautiful and excellent whether in man or woman; and from this quick and ready sympathy with all human excellence it was that, while he spoke the truth on all occasions without fear, there was so little generally of harshness in his reproof; nay, he would carry his human forbearance and sympathetic complaisance so far on occasions as to visit a beautiful *ἑταῖρα*, and converse with her on the philosophy of dress, and the most scientific manner of spreading the net and baiting the hook for her admirers.<sup>1</sup> How incongruous would it not be to figure John Calvin or any modern theological doctor relaxing his gravity in this region so far; and yet Socrates was as veritable a saint as Calvin, only the men were constitutionally not only different, but adverse; besides, Socrates was a Greek, and, so far as impressibility by mere physical beauty is concerned, this

<sup>1</sup> See the singular dialogue with Theodote, afterwards mistress of Alcibiades, in the *Memorabilia*.

implies much. What the modern Protestant theologian would have thought it a sin to look at in the ancient philosopher might have excited an innocent and pious admiration. But the tolerant universality of large human sympathy in Socrates, however difficult it may be for some men to understand, was in fact much less an anomaly in a severe moralist than the selfish theory of Hobbes is in a man pretending to be a man at all. To explain such a perverse phenomenon we must bear in mind that the love of singularity in some minds is greater than the love of truth; that some men of great intellectual capacity are deficient in some of the finer instincts that stir heroic breasts, and fail to recognise in others what they have no experience of in themselves; that in the common characters whom one meets in daily life an essentially selfish motive can often be traced beneath the gracious surface, where to the public eye only benevolence, philanthropy, humility, and self-denial shine out with genial radiance; that the scientific mind has a peculiar pleasure in tracking out such inconsistencies; that the speculative mind in its eagerness to embrace various phenomena under one law is apt to run a-muck against Nature, delighting, as she does sometimes, more in the compromise of various principles than in the triumph of one; and finally, that men trained principally in the political and legal world often have a tendency to transfer the selfish principles which are most considered in their domain to other spheres of the social system, where more free scope is given to the exercise of the benevolent and unselfish propensities. These considerations may perhaps account for the genesis of such an incomplete moralist as Hobbes,—it is only

the common instance of a meagre plant growing up in a bad climate. Socrates, on the other hand, surprises and puzzles us by his sheer redundancy of ethical sensibility; as a tropical vegetation seems sometimes to smother with the exuberance of green life the sober demands of an eye educated in a temperate climate.

Let us now turn to the second proposition: **MAN IS A REASONING ANIMAL**;—trite enough, but what does this imply? and how far does it bring us when we attempt to answer the question started by Dr. Paley, *Why am I bound to keep my word?* Let us see how Socrates would have answered this question. Through the memoirs he stands forward in no character so strongly as in that of the expositor of unrealities. Himself the most truthful of all men, throughout a long life he can find nothing better to do than to help others, first to draw the real truth out of themselves, and then, by the touchstone thus acquired, to distinguish the true man in the actual course of life from the false pretender. Truth therefore, unadulterated truth in thought and in act, was the pole-star of his navigation. But the recognition and realization of truth is the distinctive function of reason; therefore truthfulness under every form of thought or action is the grand law of reasonableness, and in virtue of this the grand rule of human conduct. For no creature can be called upon to act at variance with its own nature; and if it should attempt to do so, it will either fail utterly—as if a worm should essay to fly—or, succeeding so far in the experiment, as when a bear dances or a man speaks lies habitually, the creature will make itself either ridiculous or contemptible. As therefore you expect

your dog to nose well, your cat to mouse well, your horse to race well, and your cow, when well grassed, to give good milk, so expect yourself on all occasions to think and to act reasonably, that is truthfully or in conformity with the reality of things ; and know for certain on each occasion that your thought or your act deviates from right reason, that thus far you are not your proper self, you are not, in the full sense of the word, a man ; you are, in fact, in reference to this matter, acting like a madman. For, as Socrates in his familiar way puts it, if a man, imagining himself twelve feet high, should bow his head whenever he entered a door eight feet high, in order to avoid fracture of the skull, would we not call such a person mad ? And if he is justly esteemed insane who in such an exorbitant way takes a false measure of his bodily height, why should one be esteemed sane who habitually makes an equally false estimate of his mental stature ? If a person were to imagine that he knew Greek, but whenever he opened his mouth poured forth a mere swallow-twitter of inarticulate jargon, could he possibly be held to be of sound mind ? or if a man should push himself forward into the van of any great undertaking, such as the building of bridges or the cutting of tunnels, conceiving himself to be able to do these things, when he was known to be ignorant of the simplest practical elements of architecture and engineering, should we not say truly that such a person is labouring under a delusion, which, if not madness, is something very closely allied to it ? From such considerations as these Socrates deduced, with all the certainty of mathematical demonstration, that the most imperative duty, and the most binding

obligation of every man—the postulate, in fact, of all reasonable and fruitful activity in life—is *γνώθι σεαυτόν*, KNOW THYSELF! and this maxim does not mean, of course, that a man is to go into a corner, and by a series of probings to take the measure of his own capacity; it means rather that we shall know our relation to that outer world in which our active powers are to be spent; it means that we shall know the world by free intercourse and by cautious trial, and that we shall make it our business with conscientious care to discover what we are fit for on this stage of things on which the drama of our life is enacted, and what we are not fit for. And always in every work, reasonably undertaken, if the execution is to be enduringly successful, let the reasonable and true man study, as the one thing needful, TO BE THE THING THAT HE WOULD SEEM TO BE.

From this statement, taken directly from the report of Xenophon, the reader will perceive that we have got in Socrates fundamentally only a very modern Scotch friend with a very ancient Greek face, viz., the excellent laird of Craigenputtoch and venerable prophet of Chelsea on the Thames, the burden of whose preaching has always been the unveiling of SHAMS. Mr. Ruskin's *Lamp of Truth in Architecture* shines also manifestly with a kindred light; and in fact it is quite certain, and the most important of all truths to be implanted in the youthful mind when starting on the career of life, that we live in a world of most grave and earnest and stiff realities, that must be dealt with in a real and honest way—that is, neither in a superficial nor in a false way, nor in an absurd way, nor with any sort of random strokes, but only in a calculated and a rea-



sonable way, and according to the unchangeable nature of things—if not, the penalty is sure. If we will mistake a granite rock for a gigot of mutton, we shall find that we have dined on something that no culinary art can make at all digestible. Let us examine in rapid detail how far the general Socratic principle of acting reasonably and truthfully will bring out the individual virtues which are the most necessary and the most esteemed, whether in the common concerns of life or in those seasons of rare culmination when manhood rises into heroism. Now, here we see plainly enough, in the first place, that all the so-called intellectual virtues—that is, those that depend on the vigorous and well-directed use of the intellectual faculties—are, by the Socratic principle, at once provided for in the most effective way. These virtues are foresight, calculation, prudence in every shape, trained talent, professional expertness, and substantial work on scientific principles in all trades and occupations. The man who does any kind of work in a careless, bungling, or superficial way is not acting as a reasonable being; for the first demand of reason, as the truthful faculty in the world of action, is to realize its idea completely and thoroughly; and this no hasty and superficial handiwork can pretend to do. Again, if a man, as happens only too often, undertakes a long walk, and having miscalculated the distance, or carried with him confused ideas of north and south, finds himself under the veil of night wandering about in a boggy waste when he ought to have been snug in his bed, he has himself to blame: he acted unreasonably in undertaking an unknown expedition without exact information or wise calculation; and it is only reasonable

that he should be overtaken by the necessary consequences of all unreasoning procedure in a world where Reason is the only law and Truth the unerring judge. In the same way, from want of accurate knowledge, wise foresight, and comprehensive survey, Crimean campaigns are bungled, and Reform Bills of most serious consequence are huddled or juggled through a house of fretful or feverish senators, and Acts of Parliament are patched up with clauses that contradict one another, and make the preamble look like a bridegroom who finds he has promised eternal fidelity to a mistaken bride. All this is unreasonable work, and the men who did it were not exercising their reason at the time of the perpetration; for any practical purpose they might as well have been blind, furious, fatuous, or asleep. 'Tis plain, therefore, that all the efficiency of every kind of work done in the world depends on its reasonableness, that is, on its truthfulness; and in full view, so to speak, of the importance of this intellectual virtue Nature has furnished man with a moral excellence closely akin to it. The recognition of truth in the strictly intellectual world becomes, in the world of propulsive passions and inspiring emotions, the love of truth. This virtue shows itself in frankness, openness, and simplicity of character, and in an imperious disdain of all sorts of equivocation, dissembling, falsehood, and disguise, according to the well-known type of the heroic character in Homer :

“ That man within my soul I hate, even as the gates of hell,  
Who speaks fair words, but in his heart dark lies and  
treachery dwell.”

Here Achilles, every one feels, is speaking like a man; and, though all truth is not always every-

where to be proclaimed, yet on great occasions, where to strike the just mean is difficult, he who in an impulse of fearless fervour vents a little too much truth, is always more admired than the man who from a surcharge of cautious reticence speaks too little. For a lie, in fact, as Plato says in the *Republic*, is a thing naturally hateful both to gods and men; nor indeed could it be otherwise; for what is all nature but a manifestation in visible forms of a grand army of invisible forces? and an untruthful manifestation is no manifestation at all, but rather a concealment, as if a man should use words to say the very contrary of what he means, which words, certainly, whatever effect they might have, could not possibly be any exhibition of his real nature. It is plain therefore that a lie is on every occasion a contradiction to the essential truthfulness, and an obstacle thrown in the way to the direct purpose, of nature; and whenever lies are told, it will be found that they proceed either from a fundamental feebleness, that is, an inherent lack of assertive and demonstrative force, or from fear, that is, a comparative feebleness in respect of some external threatening force, or finally from a systematic perversion or inversion of nature in individual cases or unfavourable circumstances, which operate as an obstruction to the free expression of the essential truthfulness of things. In this way individuals whose social sympathies have been frosted in early life, may grow up into a monstrous incarnation of selfishness, living by the practice of systematic falsity, of which we have examples enough in the professional swindlers of whose achievements almost every newspaper contains some record; and whole classes of men, as slaves and helots, kept in a

state of unnatural bondage and subjection, may learn, or rather must learn, to practise lies as their only safety from injustice. Every slave is naturally a liar; for his nature is a false nature, and has grown up into a contradiction to all nature, as trees by forceful artifice are made to grow downwards seeking the earth, instead of upwards to find the sun. And we may say generally, that ninety-nine out of every hundred lies that are told in society are lies of cowardice; lies of gigantic impudence and unblushing selfishness, like the lies of Alexander the false prophet in the second century, and other gross impostors, being comparatively few; though of course, when they do occur, they excite more attention and figure more largely in the newspapers. And from these considerations we see plainly how it is that the world places such a high value on the virtue of courage; for courage arises mainly from the possession of that amount of physical or moral energy which enables a man truthfully and emphatically in a real world to assert himself as an effective reality; and in fact there is no character that in the general judgment of mankind, and in a special degree to the British feeling, appears more contemptible than the man who, on the appearance of any petty danger, or the prospective emergence of a possible difficulty, forthwith sneaks out of his position, gives the open lie to his own professions, and the cold shoulder to his best friend. So deep-rooted and so wide-spread, so woven into the living fibres of the very heart of things, is the virtue of truth and truthfulness in nature and life, which again, as we have said, is the mere utterance of reason; the necessary utterance consequently of an essentially reasonable being, and not at all the artificial product of a selfish compact

or calculation of any kind, as Hobbes and the other advocates of selfism, more or less modified, affirm. We speak the truth therefore, and we are bound to keep our promise, not because experience proves that society could not exist for a single day under the pervading influence of all sorts of falsehood, nor again because it can be proved by a formal induction that to speak the truth, as a general rule, is the best way to secure the greatest happiness of the greatest number—though there can be no harm in a man fortifying his virtue by these very true and very philanthropic considerations, if he chooses,—but the root of the matter lies deeper and more near to the heart of the individual man, springing, as we have said, directly out of the essential truthfulness and reasonableness of nature, according to the prime postulate not of the philosophy of Socrates only, but of Plato and Aristotle also, and all the great teachers of practical wisdom amongst the Greeks.

It does not seem necessary, after what has been said, to expatiate largely on the obvious deduction of the other cardinal virtues from the Socratic principle of Reason or Truth. Wherever we turn our eyes it will require little perspicacity to perceive that to do the right is on all occasions to do the true thing,—as an apostle has it, *ποιεῖν τὴν ἀλήθειαν*, to do the truth; or, in the words of a great son of the Porch, *not to demand that things shall be as we wish, but to wish that things shall be as they are.* The great virtue of Justice, for instance, which, in its widest and well-known Platonic sense, signifies giving to every person and thing that which properly belongs to it, is nothing but the assertion in act of the truth in reference to their concurrent or adverse claims; for how can a man realize in any

relation of life the beautiful Stoical definition of Right given in the Institutes of Justinian—*Justitia est constans et perpetua voluntas suum cuique tribuendi*—how can a man assign to each person that which is properly his, unless he knows truly the nature and natural claims not of that person only, but of all persons with whom his claim may come into competition? It is plain therefore that Justice is merely knowledge or reason;<sup>1</sup> and as the claims of different parties in reference to the same thing are often very various and complicated, hence it is that to be a just judge a man does not require to have a benevolent nature—though in cases of equity the kindly feelings also must come into play—so much as to have an intellect of large range, of firm grasp, and of subtle power of discrimination. And if anybody, with special reference to legal decisions, chooses to ask not only what qualities constitute a good judge, but on what principles the idea of property is founded—how he is to know the exact boundaries of MEUM and TUUM in particular cases,—the answer here also, on the Socratic postulate of truth and natural reasonableness, will be obvious enough. That is mine by the law of nature and truth and God, which is either a part of me, or the natural and necessary fruit and product of that vital energy which I call ME; or, more simply, the product of my labour and the issues of my activity are mine; and no man can have a right or a claim consistent with the truth of things, to appropriate the fruit of that growth whereof the root and the stem and the living branches

<sup>1</sup> Professor Grote says—"Law is the public reason of a society, participated in more or less by the mass of individuals, enforceable upon all who will not participate in it."—*On Utilitarianism*.

and the vital juices are a necessary part of me.<sup>1</sup> But it is not mere legal justice and a true apportionment of the Mine and Thine that flow as a plain corollary from the obligation of acting the truth, but the wider equities of Christian charity and toleration; yea, and the very constraining power of the Golden Rule itself is evolved unmistakeably from the same principle. For what is it that from the time of Greeks and Romans down to very recent days has tainted the whole laws of European countries with such harsh declarations of intolerant dogmatism and merciless persecution? Simply the fact that men, from defect of sympathy and defect of knowledge, had never been trained to realize the truth of things as between the natural right of a majority to profess a national creed, and the equally natural right of a minority to entertain doubts and to state objections as to the whole or any part of such a creed. Intolerance proceeds either from narrowness of view or from deficiency of sympathy; and in either case it blinds the bigot to the fact that the right which he has to his own opinions never can confer on him any right to dictate opinions to others; the moment he does that he invades a dominion that does not belong to him, and transgresses the truth of Nature; nor will this transgression be less flagrant when it is made by ten millions against one man, than if it

<sup>1</sup> The Communists, who declare war against Capital, can get over this only by saying that every society is entitled to demand of its members that they shall sacrifice any part of their natural rights for the good of the whole to which they belong, and further, that man being essentially a social animal has no right to anything except as a member of society. The question will then be, whether it is good for society to be so exclusively society as to swallow up all individualism and what naturally belongs thereto.

were made by one against ten millions. In the same way all those superficial and inadequate, too often also harsh and severe, judgments which we see and read daily amongst men in the common converse of life, are the result of a habitual carelessness as to truth, of which habit only too efficiently conceals the grossness. And under the bitter inspiration of ecclesiastical and political warfare, men, when speaking of their adversaries, will not only lightly excuse themselves from using any special care in testing the facts which it suits their purpose to parade, but they will even consciously present a garbled statement constructed upon the principle of pushing into prominence everything that is bad, and keeping out of view everything that is good in the character of the person whom it may suit the use of the moment to vilify. And in this way even the sacred-sounding columns of an evangelical newspaper may become a systematic manufactory of lies, against which most gross abuse of the truth of Nature the son of Sophroniscus, if he were to appear on earth now, would assuredly lift his protest with tenfold more emphasis than he ever did against the sham knowledge of the most superficial of the Sophists.

One or two short paragraphs will enable us now to say all that remains to be said on the great principles of the Socratic philosophy of Ethics.

In the first place, nothing that has been said here in endeavouring shortly to epitomize the leading idea of Socrates with regard to practical reason and acted truth, assumes to settle definitively that much-vexed question, *How far is a man at any time, from any motive, and for any object, entitled to tell or to enact*



*SOCRATES.*



*a lie?* In a dialogue of considerable length which Socrates holds with Euthydemus, a raw and conceited young Athenian, who, because he possessed a great library, imagined himself to possess much wisdom, the philosopher is represented as puzzling the young gentleman with such questions as the following: Whether is it lawful for a general, with the view of raising the drooping spirits of his soldiers, to give out an unfounded report that friends are coming up to help them? Whether, if a father, whose sick son refuses to take a necessary medicine, shall disguise this medicine under the aspect of food, and by the ministry of this drugged aliment restore his son to health, this act of deceit is right or wrong? Or again, if a friend whom we love is given to fits of melancholy, and may be apt in an evil moment to meditate suicide, is it an act of culpable theft privately to purloin or forcibly to abstract the sword or other lethal instrument of which he may avail himself to commit the fatal act? In such and similar cases, though the point is rather raised than settled, Socrates plainly seems to imply that lies are both natural and beneficial, and therefore ought to be tolerated. And in truth, though the extreme dogmatism of certain of the Church Fathers lays down the doctrine that the obligation of truth-speaking and truth-doing is absolute, and admits of no exception, yet the common sense of mankind, and the universal practice of saints and sinners in all ages and in all countries, goes along with Socrates (and we may add Plato here, *Rep.* ii.) in the assertion, that where violence is done to Nature in one way by an unnatural overwhelming force, such as occurs in war, then Nature defends herself by a

violence to her habitual principles in an opposite direction ; that is to say, it will be justifiable, on certain occasions, and within certain limits, to defeat force by fraud ; or, as Lysander the captor of Athens used to say, where a man may not show the lion's hide he must wrap himself in the fox's skin. But the very suspicion with which the general moral sentiment guards the extension of this motive, which in extreme cases it allows, shows that all deviation from truth is looked upon as the result of a force upon Nature ; and, if it may in certain cases be excused or even imperatively commanded, it never brings with it the natural aliment of our better nature, which breathes freely only in the wide and pure atmosphere of truth. The general obligation of truth, therefore, according to the doctrine of Socrates, is not at all weakened by the occasional necessity of deceit ; for while the one rests firmly on the foundation of the eternal constitution of things, the other is the mere shift of the moment, the sudden dictate of an expediency, which in noble natures is half ashamed of itself when it succeeds.

Another well-known dogma of the Socratic philosophy is, that not only is Science as the product of Reason the supreme legislative authority in all questions of morals, but in point of fact also, that to know what is right is to do what is good, for no man with his eyes open will perpetrate an act which demonstrably leads to his own destruction. Of this assertion, so contrary to the universal experience of mankind, and so ably refuted by Aristotle and his school in the *Nicomachean ethics*, it need only be said that it is one of those paradoxes in the garb of

which all philosophies are apt to clothe themselves occasionally, partly for the gratification of the teacher, who delights to push his principle to an acme, partly for the benefit of the scholar, whose attention is excited and his imagination pleased by the startling novelty of the dictum. The proposition of Socrates therefore, that knowledge is virtue, and vice not only folly but ignorance, is of the same nature with the paradox of the Stoics, that *the virtuous man can have no enemy*, or that *pain is no evil*, or with the precept in the Gospel, which no man ever thinks of obeying in the letter, that when a thief takes your cloak you should thank him, like a benign Quaker, for his kindness, and give him your coat into the bargain. But it is possible to defend the paradox of Socrates taken strictly, by saying that when a man does a thing which demonstrably leads to his ruin, he either never had this demonstration vividly present to his mind, or, at the moment when the self-destroying act was committed, his knowing faculty was blinded and sopited, dosed and drugged by his passions, and so, at the time when his knowledge was most required, he was virtually ignorant of what he was about. But there is little profit in puzzling about such paradoxical maxims, as, like Berkeley's theory about the non-existence of matter, they are constantly open to be corrected by common-sense and the daily experience of life. A Calvinist preaches Fatalism in the pulpit to-day, but to-morrow flogs his slave or his son for abusing his free-will. So a smart twitch of the toothache answers the Stoics when they assert that pain is no evil: and the lives of Solomon, King David, and Robert Burns prove that great men in all ages have, in

their cool moments, been as nobly sagacious as Socrates, but not therefore at all moments as consistently virtuous.

The last point which demands notice here is the relation which virtue bears to happiness, and to the much-bespoken utilitarianism of the most recent ethical school in this country. Now the truth with regard to this stands patent on the very face of the Socratic argument, and can escape no man who goes through the *Memorabilia* with ordinary sympathy. The happiness of every creature consists in the free and unhindered exercise of its characteristic function; the happiness of a horse in racing well, of a dog in nosing well, of a cat in mousing well, of a man in reasoning well, that is, in thinking and acting reasonably. For the opposite state of things to this could only exist on the supposition that the Author of Nature or the Supreme Artificer (ὁ δημιουργός, as Socrates and Plato loved to phrase it) delighted in inspiring creatures with a desire, and providing them with a machinery, to do things the direct effect of which is to make them miserable; that is to say, if the demiurge were a demon; of which demoniacal government of the world, however, happily there is no sign; for not even the most tortured victim of toothache, as Dr. Paley observes, has yet found himself warranted in drawing the conclusion that teeth in general were made for no other purpose than that people might be tormented with such excruciating pangs. Happiness, therefore, and the reasonable exercise of his faculties by a reasonable creature, are identical. No creature can deliberately desire to make itself miserable, and no rational creature can escape misery except by acting reasonably. And if,

in the language of the schools, any person, from this point of view, shall call Socrates a eudæmonist,<sup>1</sup> a eudæmonist unquestionably he was. But we must bear in mind that, while he was the warm advocate of all sorts of happiness and enjoyment, and himself at the same time a living picture of vital joy and geniality, he never allowed himself to be carried away by the perverse and perilous subtlety of a certain school of philosophers, both in ancient and modern times, who thought to do honour to the eudæmonistic principle by confounding the good with the pleasurable.<sup>2</sup> For the distinction so broadly established in all languages between Pleasure as an affair of momentary excitement or titillation, and Good as the source of lasting and permanent enjoyment, is not to be obliterated by the arbitrary terminology of men who write ethical systems in books. According to the established use of language, from Socrates and St. Paul down to the present hour, Pleasure cannot be the good of man,—it may be the good of a brute; for as pleasure is momentary happiness, without reason, or it may be often in the teeth of reason, so the Good is reasonable and permanent happiness, accompanied, it may be, with a little momentary pain, but productive of lasting satisfaction. So much for eudæmonism. Then, as for utilitarianism, whether it be a different thing from eudæmonism, or only a different aspect of the same thing,

<sup>1</sup> *εὐδαιμονία*, happiness, literally, well-goddedness,—the state of a creature to whom the gods are kind.

<sup>2</sup> So Austin (*Province of Jurisprudence*, Lecture iv.) calls "Good the aggregate of pleasures," a language borrowed from Bentham, which Socrates, Plato, and Aristotle would with one consent have repudiated.

there is nothing more certain than that Socrates was a utilitarian. The word *useful* (χρήσιμον or ὠφέλιμον) is constantly occurring in his conversations; utility in fact was the starting-point of his whole movement, and gives the key-note to all his discussions; for his grand objection, as we saw above, to the physical speculations of his predecessors, was that they were useless, as opposed to which the doctrine which he preached was recommended on the ground of its practical utility. Of this utilitarian principle he was indeed so fond, that, like his doctrine of virtue being founded on knowledge, he was inclined to push it too far, and certainly did run it, in some cases, to absolute falsity. This appears most strikingly in two dialogues in the *Memoirs*, where, in opposition to the idol-worship of mere beauty, so dear to the Greeks, he flatly lays down the counter proposition that nothing can be beautiful except in so far as it serves the purpose for which it was intended; in other words, that beauty consists in that suitability or fitness of an article to effect its purpose which makes it a useful article. But every one sees that there is a jump in the logic here, which, if Socrates had been as anxious to establish a scientific theory of beauty as he was to present rational morals, he certainly could not have made. For though every article, as the imperative condition of its existence, ought to answer the purpose for which it was made, and the article which answers this purpose best is the best article; and though beauty of structure is a something superadded, and which will always offend if it is plainly at war with the design, fitness, and utility of the structure—for which reason, as architects say, the ornamentation

ought always to grow out of the construction,—it is quite a different thing to say that beauty and fitness or utility are identical. The railway companies in our day have thrown across not a few beautiful rivers and picturesque gorges the ugliest iron bridges that can be conceived; but no doubt they are as useful, and perhaps may be more permanent, than stone structures of a more elegant and graceful design. We shall therefore say that Socrates, in his remarks on the *τὸ καλόν*, pushed his utilitarian principles and the extreme practicality of his nature into the domain of the absurd and the false. But within his proper province of morals, one cannot see that he was led by his doctrine of utility into any speculative or practical mistake. For the word *useful* in itself is a word which really has no meaning; it is always only a stepping-stone to something beyond itself, and receives significance only when from some independent source the end is exhibited which the useful object subserves. When, therefore, Socrates talks about morality being identical with utility, he is not asserting a philosophical principle like the modern writers who use that term; he only means to say that a certain course of conduct founded on reason, or certain maxims deduced from reason, are useful to a man to enable him to obtain the end of his existence, that is, a certain happiness according to his opportunities and capacities. And if the advocates of the so-called utilitarian philosophy, finding the utter unmeaningness of their favourite shibboleth as a distinctive term, shall tell us that utility means something absolute (which however it can do only by interpolating into itself an altogether foreign idea), if, however, they shall say, as they are

in the habit of doing, that that course of action is useful which tends to promote "the greatest happiness of the greatest number," then here they say nothing which either Socrates or Plato or the apostle Paul, or Dr. Wollaston or Immanuel Kant or in fact any sane man, ever dreamt of contravening. In virtue of his faith in the innate sociabilities of man as opposed to the selfism of Hobbes, Socrates could not but believe that it was his duty, after having made his own life reasonable in the first place, to help other people to get out of the limbo of unreason as speedily as possible. This he says again and again in his conversations; in fact, his whole missionary exertions meant nothing else; and the philanthropic power of the missionary impulse which impelled him to seek the rational happiness of his fellow-men having once full sway in his heart, the wish for the greatest happiness of the greatest number followed as a matter of course. Every missionary estimates his success and feels his moral enjoyment increased by the number of his converts. The man who desires the happiness of his fellow-beings at all, whether as Epicurus or Plato, must desire that happiness to the greatest number of human beings that can comfortably enjoy it within certain given limits of space and time.

The next great division of our subject leads us to consider, what is by no means a matter of secondary importance, the peculiar and characteristic manner in which Socrates inculcated the lofty principles of his ethical philosophy—the so-called Socratic method of teaching and of preaching. Now, with regard to this, in the first place, what lies on the surface is that the Socratic method of inculcating the principles of morals consists in a sort of catechising or cross-ques-



tioning such as is practised by lawyers in Westminster Hall, a method which is generally considered not the most pleasant of operations even there, and which if practised now-a-days by private persons, whether in West-end saloons or in East-end parlours, would certainly be considered extremely ill-bred. And that this should be the general feeling of all classes of mankind with regard to the matter is natural enough; for the object of the operation being generally to convince the person operated on that he knows nothing about what he professes to know, and to do this by publicly entangling him in the web of his own arguments, and forcing him into a self-contradiction, it is obvious that self-esteem and love of approbation will, in ninety-nine cases out of the hundred, be strong enough to stir a certain degree of resentment in the breast of the sufferer. Nay, sometimes will he not feel like a poor fish cleverly hooked by an expert angler, and played about perhaps more to show the skill of the captor than from any consideration of the feelings of the captive? All this is very true; and no doubt Socrates made not a few enemies by this extremely personal method of exposing the manifold superficialities and incompetencies of the persons with whom he conversed. But, upon the whole, that he was rather a popular man, or more correctly, an extremely popular man, in Athens, during a long lifetime, notwithstanding the catastrophe of the hemlock, seems pretty plain both from Xenophon and Plato. This popularity, in the face of what certainly was a rather odious mission, arose both from the kindly sympathetic nature of the man, and from the admirable tact which the philosopher constantly displayed in deal-

ing with those whom he submitted to the operation of his ethical probe. Though in the majority of cases he was found to end in a direct contradiction of the original position of his adversary, he always commenced by agreeing with him; and if he saw nothing absolutely to agree with in the way of argument, he took care to launch him in a good humour by praising some excellence in him or about him. Thus, in the case of Euthydemus, mentioned above as the possessor of a large library, he gives prominence to the praiseworthy ambition shown by the young man to spend his money rather on the sentences of the wise than on the vanities of external pomp and pernicious dissipation; and thus, though the young book-fancier departs at the end of the dialogue altogether shorn of his conceit, and thinking the best thing he can do hereafter to prove his learning is to hold his tongue, yet he leaves the philosopher with no rankling ill-will, but rather disposed towards him as one feels towards a kind and considerate physician who has been forced to administer to his patient a nauseous drug. And thus the mild manner of the teacher removed, in a great measure, the offence of the lesson; for it is, as an apostle says, "the wrath of man which worketh not the righteousness of God," in most cases, not the mere speaking of the truth, if the truth be spoken in love. Let us inquire now more particularly how the cross-examination went on. Aristotle, in a well-known passage of the *Metaphysics*, tells us that there were two inventions to which Socrates might justly lay claim—the defining of general terms (*τὸ ὀρίζεσθαι καθόλου*), and inductive reasoning (*ἐπακτικοὶ λόγοι*). A modern instance will enable us to under-

stand what this means. Suppose I get into an argument with any person as to whether A. or B., or any person holding certain opinions, manifesting certain feelings, and acting in a certain way, is a Christian. I say he is; my contradictor says he is not; how, then, shall we settle the difference? Following the example of Socrates, the best procedure certainly will be to ask him to define what he means by a Christian. Suppose then he answers, *A Christian is a religious person who believes in the Nicene Creed*, I immediately reply, The Nicene Creed was not sent forth till the year 325 after Christ; what then do you make of the thousands and hundreds of thousands of Christians who lived before that? To this objection the answer of course will be that the Nicene Creed, though not set forth in express articles, did virtually exist as a part of the living faith of all true Christians. Then, if I doubt this, I say, Was Origen a Christian, was Justin Martyr a Christian? are you sure these two Fathers believed every article of that Creed? My opponent now, in all likelihood, not being profoundly versed in patristic lore, is staggered; and I proceed, we shall suppose, to cite some passages from some one of the ante-Nicene Fathers, which imply dissent from some of the articles of the orthodox symbol. He is then reduced to the dilemma of either denying that this Father was a Christian, or (as that will scarcely be allowable) widening his original definition so as to include a variety of cases which, by the narrowness of the terms, were excluded. I then go on to test the comprehensiveness of the new definition in the same way; and if I find that it contains any elements which belong to the species and not to

the genus, any peculiarities say of modern Calvinism, or of mediæval Popery, that do not belong to the general term "Christianity," I push him into a corner in the same way as before, till I bring out from his own admissions a pure and broad definition of the designation Christian, as opposed to Heathen, Jew, or any other sort of religious professor. Now the example here given was purposely chosen, to make manifest by a familiar example, what everyday experience must teach us, that the principal cause of difference of opinion amongst men is, that people start in argument with some general term, with respect to which they do not know, and have in fact never thought of seriously inquiring, what extent of ground it covers. So that when the inadequate notions with which the minds of untrained persons are possessed have to be replaced by adequate ones, the process always resolves itself into a making of definitions, and a strict scrutiny of some general term, which had hitherto passed current without special interrogation. A teacher therefore, who would be practically useful to mankind, and not merely make brilliant oratorical displays to tickle and to amuse, must before all things make it his business to see that they have clear ideas, not on matters of profound and remote speculation, but on the common currency of general terms which the necessities of social life require. Such a teacher was Socrates; and hence the logical form which his practical teaching by cross-examination, among a people passionately fond of arguing, naturally assumed. A less argumentative people than the Greeks, such as ourselves,—English and Scotch and Irish,—will often look on a Socratic dialogue in Plato, or even Xeno-

phon, as curiously pedantic, which to the Athenians was only amusingly subtle. Even Socrates, the most practical, and, in the sense explained above, the most utilitarian of men, loved to have his little logical play out of the discussion, in a fashion which to a broad practical Briton, unaccustomed to speculation, and impatient, often incapable of grappling with a principle, would appear impertinent. So much for the Socratic hunt after definitions. As to the other point mentioned by Aristotle, that Socrates deserves praise as the inventor of inductive reasoning, there is really no cause for surprise in the matter. Lord Bacon was not the inventor of this method of dealing with facts; neither indeed, if we look beneath the surface, was Socrates; both induction and deduction exist in a state of constant action and reaction in every normally developed human mind; but the praise which belongs to Bacon is that of having pressed the inductive method, with strong adjurations and a special machinery, into the service of physical science; while the praise, no less important, belongs to Socrates, of having taught men four hundred years before Christ, to be as scrupulously exact in testing by experience their moral ideas, as they now are in proving by experiment their physical theories. Let us take a well-known instance of induction in physical science, and then see how, under certain obvious modifications, the same method of procedure must be adopted in the successful cultivation of the moral sciences. We know, for instance, that there exists a marvellous, almost miraculous, force pervading the universe, called Electricity; this is now one of the widest of general terms in the vocabulary of physical science, and arrived at, like

all other such terms, by the carefully weighed steps of a long induction. Certain phenomena of attraction are first observed, in reference to amber, wax, and other bodies, when rubbed, free from the influence of humidity ; the same phenomena are then observed in other bodies, and accompanied with the emission of sparks of light and tiny explosions ; by an ingeniously contrived apparatus the force which causes these sparks and these explosions is accumulated, and the effects produced by this higher potency of the same force become of course more noticeable, and some of these experiments lead a thinking man irresistibly to the notion that what we call electricity, as elicited by us from our electrical machines, is only a sort of mimic thunder and lightning, as crackers with which boys play on the Queen's birthday are in principle the same as big cannons and Lancaster guns. This idea, once entertained, is tested in many different ways, till the conclusion is certainly arrived at that electricity and lightning are identical. By and by other forces, such as magnetism and galvanism, being considered more carefully, and compared with the electricity of the electric machines, are found to possess many points of resemblance, and are in time concluded to be fundamentally the same ; and now our general term electricity is widened into a cosmical power, which if we fail to define, the failure will arise not from building on partial facts, but because our generalization has clearly mounted so high into the domain of the Infinite that the finite understanding staggers, and perhaps is doomed for ever to stagger, at the attempt to hold it in firm grasp. Thus the progress of physical science is a continual process of the giving up of inadequate

general terms, and supplying them by something either exactly adequate, or approximating to adequacy, as high as the human intellect can hope to ascend. Now to this process the discovery of the true significance of general terms in morals forms an exact parallel. Suppose, for instance, a young Englishman emerging out of the merely physical delights of cricket and boat-racing, and beginning to occupy himself seriously with some of the great social questions of the day. To him morality first presents itself, not in the form of logical analysis, the characteristic engine of Socrates, but in the concrete form of the Christian Church. He starts therefore with an idea of ethical science as a part of Christianity, and of Christianity as he knows it, formulated in certain articles of belief, represented dramatically in certain liturgic services; and held together by a certain hierarchy of office-bearers. In this condition it is not to be expected that the idea either of Morals, or of Church, or of Religion, or of Christianity, will exist in his mind so purified from adventitious and accidental matter as to stand the test of strict reasoning. What then is to be done with him, if he is not to remain contented with that purely local conception of moral and religious truth which belongs to him like his cylindrical hat or his swallow-tail coat, as an affair of accepted tradition rather than of reasoned truth? Plainly there is only one course: you must convince him of the insufficiency of his premises for warranting any general conclusion at all; and, then leading him through the whole moral and ecclesiastical experience of the Christian Church, open to him a wide and a sure field of observation from which legitimate inductions

with regard to moral and religious ideas comprised in the term Christianity can be made. So that the cross-examination, of which we gave a specimen above, is in reality a process of induction as much as the processes in physical science by which electricity is identified with galvanism, and both with magnetism. But if the ethical idea is to emerge perfectly pure from such an investigation, our young Episcopal philosopher will require to broaden his conception of morality and religion yet further, so as to embrace moral phenomena of an important kind beyond the pale of the term Christianity altogether. No doubt Christianity is to us, and has been to the most favoured races of humanity, for nearly two thousand years, the grand bearer of the deepest moral truth; but the religion of Christ does not exist everywhere,—did not exist certainly when a Pythagoras, a Socrates, and a Plato founded their great schools of moral teaching and training among the Greeks; and thus to bring out the ethical idea strong in the internal identity of all its various Avatars, our young inquirer must launch out into the wide, and in a great measure hitherto unexplored, sea of comparative ethics and comparative theology. A type of this sort of procedure will be found in the late admirable Baron Bunsen's book entitled *God in History*, a work with regard to which even those who do not accept all its conclusions must admit that it is constructed upon the only scheme on which a large and adequate philosophy of ethical and religious truth can be raised.

We have said that moral investigation, when conducted on the Socratic method, is as truly inductive as any process in physical science. But there is a



distinction, and that a very vital one. In moral inquiries we can often start directly with deduction from some inward principle, implanted in the human mind by the Author of our being. The love of truth, for instance, as above set forth, is one of those principles; our general term in this case we bring with us; and any induction which we may require is not to prove the existence of such an instinct, but to verify, to extend, and to correct our notions of its applicability, or perhaps merely to confirm us in our original sacred faith, by showing in detail that society never has existed, and in fact never can exist, without that regard to truth in all dealings of man with man, the necessity of which we had asserted originally from the constraining power of the inborn moral imperative decree. And if our moral principles always existed in a vivid and healthy state, there might be little need for the slow retrogressive process of induction in ethics; but as these instincts are peculiarly liable to be enfeebled, curtailed, and perverted by individual neglect, as well as social constraint, the corrective and cathartic process by induction on a more extended basis becomes necessary for the worst men, and not without utility for the best. At the same time, of the noblest minds in the moral world it may always be asserted that their whole life has been rather a practical deduction from lofty truths given by original inspiration from the Divine Source of all vitality than the product of any induction from an acquired survey of facts. The work of a great moral teacher or reformer, such as the apostle Paul or Thomas Chalmers, is in fact a creation as much as the poems of a Shakespeare or the paintings of a Raphael; and has a

manifest affinity also with the grand deductions of mathematical genius, which, from the postulated form of a triangle, a circle, or other figure of which the conditions are dictated by the mind, not gathered from observation, evolves an array of the most curious relations, of which no one had hitherto dreamed, and which are each one as necessary and absolutely true as the postulate from which they came forth. Exactly so with Morals. An admitted postulate—say of truthfulness, of love, or whatever inborn original principle you please,—may be worked out as the world advances into ever new and more noble practical applications, which shall be as unconditionally right as the original divine force out of which they grew. And as the propositions of Euclid can be proved *a posteriori* by empirical measurements, though they do not depend on these measurements, in the same way the great truths of ethical science may be proved from induction, though in the case at least of great moral teachers they are the direct and pure products of an inspired deduction. And both with respect to mathematical and moral truths, it may be said that, while the *a posteriori* inductive method forces assent upon the lowest class of minds, the *a priori* or deductive method is the spontaneous evolution of the highest class of minds, whose dictates are sympathetically accepted by all whom Divine grace may have disposed to be touched by the noble contagion.

So much for the logical element in the Socratic method. But as his logic was merely the dexterous weapon of a great moral apostleship, we must look on him also from this aspect, and contrast the method of his teaching with that of a modern ser-

mon. A sermon is either the most rousing and effective, or the tamest and most ineffective of all moral addresses, according to the character and power of the man who delivers it. If the speaker has a real vocation to address his fellow-men on moral subjects, and if he does not deal in vague and trivial generalities, sounding very pious on Sunday, but having no distinct and recognisable reference to the secular business of Monday, then a good sermon may be compared to a discharge of moral electricity, which will arouse many sleepers, or to the setting up of a sure finger-post, which will direct many wanderers. But if he is tame, and a mere professional dealer in certain routine articles of piety, which religious people wear as a sort of amulet rather than use as a weapon—in this case no species of moral address can be looked on as less effective ; for it neither rouses nor guides, and instead of ending in any work in the life of the hearer (and all moral teaching that does not end in a work is vanity), the hearing of it is rather looked on as a sort of work in itself, which, however short, is generally considered as having been a little too long when it is ended. Now, as distinguished from both these styles of pulpit address, the Socratic sermon was addressed to the individual man, and could not fail to produce a distinct and tangible effect ; for it ended always by saying to the hearer, as Nathan said to David, *THOU ART THE MAN !* There was no escape from the appeal ; it might not hover about the ears with a pious hum for half an hour, and then be forgotten ; it must either be indignantly rejected, or graciously accepted. And herein precisely lay the great distinction between Socrates and the Sophists,

a distinction which Mr. Grote has so perversely done his best to obliterate. Socrates was a preacher ; the Sophists were not. Socrates was a patriot fighting and dying earnestly for a great cause ; the Sophists were cunning masters of fence, who had no cause to fight for except themselves and their own pockets. But Socrates, though in a very different way, was as earnestly a moral reformer in Athens as Calvin was in Geneva. When the stern Genevese disciplinarian set himself with all the resolution of a manly nature to put some checks and hindrances in the way of the loose practices of the "Libertines" of Lake Leman, these respectable people protested strongly against the attempt, saying to the unflinching preacher, "It is your place to explain the Scriptures ; what right have you to meddle with other things—to talk about morals and find fault ?" And even so in Athens there were certain Libertines who used exactly the same language to Socrates. Had you been a mere talker like the other Sophists, you might have been allowed to talk ; talking is a very innocent affair ; but your talk is not a mere exhibition of lingual dexterity ; it means something ; it means perhaps danger to the State,—certainly it means danger to us ; it means that we may be called to account for our deeds by any man who assumes to have a more scrupulous conscience or a more enlightened reason than ourselves ; and this is what we will not tolerate.

One of the oddities of Socrates which seems to have offended the nice taste of the *χαλκίτες*, or men of elegant culture in Athens, was the homeliness of his style and the familiarity of his illustrations. This is particularly alluded to by Alcibiades in the

humorous speech in Plato's Banquet, from which an extract has been already made. In the peroration of that speech Alcibiades is made to say that not only the personal appearance, but the whole style and language of Socrates, had a close affinity to the Sileni and Satyrs; for instead of using elegantly turned sentences and studiously selected illustrations, like the Sophists, he was always talking about "smiths and tanners and shoemakers, and asses with pack-saddles," and a whole host of such vulgarities, which to the hearer at first seemed to make him ridiculous; but by and by they discovered that behind all this rough Satyr's hide of uncouth expression there lurked a truly divine meaning, and the faces of gods peeped out through the holes of the beggar's coat. And the same language is used in Xenophon by Critias and Charicles when, in the exercise of a tyrannical authority, they called upon the philosopher to cease from his dangerous business of talking sedition to the young men. Now, any man who considers this matter will perceive that the peculiarity of style here noted lay partly in the natural character of the man, partly was the best style which he could possibly have adopted, if he really wished to do good as a moral missionary, and not merely to parade himself before men as a clever talker. The dignity of the pulpit in modern times is one of the great causes of its comparative inefficiency; it will not condescend to familiar subjects; it rejects familiar illustrations as bad taste, and the consequence too frequently is that it is not received into the confidence of every-day life, and stands apart on too lofty a pedestal to be useful. But as a sensible and acute ethical writer remarks,

"if moral questions disdain to walk the streets, the philosophy of them must remain in the clouds;"<sup>1</sup> and so Socrates is justified in his method of testing every lofty principle by a familiar example, and, like Wordsworth, the thoughtful poet of the Lakes, teaching us that philosophy is then most profound when it points out what is uncommon in common things, and that he is a wiser man who plucks a lesson from the daisy at his feet than he who wanders for it to the stars above his head.

Another notable peculiarity of the Socratic method is, that, while in the majority of cases the discussion seems to end in unveiling the ignorance of pretenders to knowledge, and, as we express it, taking the conceit out of them, in other cases the young examinee, instead of being convicted of ignorance, is pleasantly surprised at finding that he knows more than he suspected, and goes home with the comfortable assurance that he needs not to sink his bucket into any foreign shaft, but really possesses a well of living waters in his own soul, if he will only work it faithfully, and be careful to remove obstructions. The unveiling of this hidden fountain of knowledge to the humble and thoughtful inquirer is the famous obstetric process of which Socrates humorously boasted himself a practiser. As his mother's profession was to help nature to bring her physical births easily and happily to the light, so her son's business was to practise intellectual obstetrics, and help people to deliver themselves of their intellectual offspring. In this method of talking there is involved the whole philosophy of the best art of teaching; even as the word *education* by its

<sup>1</sup> *On the Philosophy of Ethics.* By S. S. Laurie : Edin. 1866.

etymological affinities plainly indicates, in so far as it signifies to "draw out," not to "put in." We see here again the practical issue of that fine erotic passion for human beings, that divine rage for humanity, which was the inspiration of his life, and put into his hands the golden key to the hearts of all teachable men. While he was the most exact and scientific, he was, at the same time, the least dogmatic and egotistic of moral teachers. He did not desire so much that men should placidly submit to receive his dogmas, as that they should be trained to the grand human function of shaping out the universal divine idea, or at least some part of it, each man for himself, according to his capacity. He wished to be no more than the trencher of the moral soil, not the planter of the seed; the seed lay already in the clod, which being broken, the outward influences of sun and air and dew excited from within the growth of an essentially divine germ.

Let it be noted under this head, in conclusion, that it was essential to the reformatory mission of Socrates that he should teach without a fee. The man who practises a trade or a profession may justly demand the wages of his labour; but to preach moral truth, to protest against public sins, and convert sinners, is no profession for which the world can be expected to pay. Those who practise remunerative trades and professions supply the immediate wants of the world, and are paid in the world's coin; but for this payment they become the slaves of the masters who employ them, and must give the rightful value for the stipulated reward. But a prophet, or an apostle, or a teacher of moral truth in any shape, knows that he is bringing an article to the

market for which there may be no demand; he knows further that, by his mere attitude as a preacher, he is assuming a superiority over his brethren which is inconsistent with the equality of position and right which the act of buying and selling supposes in the parties concerned. He must, above all things, be free in his function; and to accept money from no one is the first condition of moral independence. Of this the father of the faithful, as we read in the Book of Genesis, gave an illustrious example, when he refused to take any of the booty offered to him by the king of Sodom, "lest thou shouldest say, I have made Abram rich." And for the same reason manifestly, neither the Hebrew prophets nor the apostle Paul were paid for their preaching, nor indeed in the nature of things could he. Savonarola was not paid for publicly preaching against the vicious lives of the Popes; Luther was not paid for his manly protest against the prostitution of Divine grace in the sale of pardons for tinkling silver; and in the same way Socrates was not, and could not be, paid for his mission of convincing the cleverest persons in Athens of ignorance, shallowness, and all sorts of inadequacy. In fact he did not come forward as a professional teacher at all. He issued no flaming advertisements. He only said that he was a man in search of wisdom, and would be glad of any honest man's company and co-operation in the search. The Sophists in this and in so many other respects were altogether different. They made large professions and accepted large fees.

It remains now, in order to complete our sketch, that we give some indication of the theological



opinions and religious life of Socrates; then that we point shortly to his political opinions and public life; and lastly, that we attempt a just estimate of the circumstances and agencies which led to his singularly notable and noble exit from the brilliant stage where he had for so many years been the prominent performer. That Socrates because he was a moralist should have been also a theologian is not absolutely necessary; it is natural, however; so natural, indeed, that when a great popular teacher, like Confucius, though not theoretically an atheist, practically ignores religion, we cannot but accept this as a sign of some mental idiosyncrasy alike unfortunate for the teacher and the taught. For to deny a First Cause, or not to assert it decidedly, is as if a man, professing to be a botanist, should describe only the character of the flower and the fruit as what appears above ground, while either from stupidity or cross-grained perversity, he ignores the root and the seed, without which the whole beauty of the blossom and the utility of the fruit could not exist; or, to take another simile, it is as if a man should curiously describe the cylinders and the pistons and the wheels, the furnaces, the boilers, and the condensing chambers of a steam-engine, and while doing so studiously avoid mentioning the name of James Watt. One would say, in such a case, that, while the describer deserved great praise for the clearness and consistency with which he had set forth the sequence of mechanical operations that make up the engine, he had left an unsatisfactory impression on the mind, by omitting the grand fact which rendered the existence of such an engine possible, viz., a creative intellect. We should say that he was a good mechanician and an

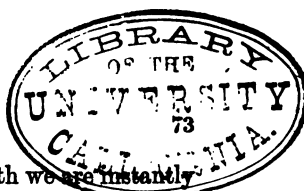
eloquent expounder of machinery, but we could not call him a philosopher; he had stopped short, in fact, at the very point where philosophy finds its thrill of peculiar delight at the vestibule of ultimate causes. To the scientific man, in the same way, who is either a speculative atheist or who studiously avoids any allusion to an original plastic Intellect as the Ultimate Cause of all things and the Primary Force of all forces, the universe is merely a vast unexplained machine, performing a closely concatenated series of unintelligible operations, tabulated under the name of LAWS; and to the moralist, who is only a moralist, society is a machine of another kind, whose wheels and pulleys and bands may be curiously described, and must be kept in nice order, but of whose genesis he can give no intelligible account. It follows, therefore, that a philosophical moralist must be a theist, and that not only on speculative grounds, but from this practical consideration also, that from no source can the Moral Law derive the unity and the authority which is essential to it, so efficiently as from the all-controlling and unifying primary fact which we call GOD. Any other key-stone contrived by ingenious wits to give consistency to the social arch is artificial; this alone is natural.<sup>1</sup> Accordingly we find that from the days of Moses and the Hebrew prophets, through Solon and Pythagoras to Socrates and Plato; from Socrates and

<sup>1</sup> "Atheism is repugnant to moral and political economy, for it necessarily destroys the idea of morality. If there is no law in the material world, there can be no law in the spiritual and social worlds. Every motive for self-restraint is removed; for the idea of an object for which to strive is rejected."—Baring-Gould, *Development of Religious Belief*, vol. i. p. 283. An original and powerful work.

Plato through the Apostles and Evangelists and the grand army of Church Fathers, to Luther, Calvin, Knox, and the other great Reformers of the sixteenth century; from the great Churchmen of the Reformation through Leibnitz and Spinoza, and Locke and Butler and Kant, down to the very recent and low platform of Paley and Austin, the foundation of Morals has been laid in Theology. And of all great theological moralists there is none who is at once more theoretically distinct and more practically consistent than Socrates. To him is to be traced the first scientific expression of the great argument from design,—an argument, no doubt, which is as old as the human heart, and exists in all unperverted minds without being formulated, but which, in a logical age and among a critical people, not the less demands to be set forth, link by link, and illustrated in detail as Socrates does in the following dialogue, a dialogue which we shall translate at length, at once as a notable landmark in theological literature, and as a good illustration of the philosopher's favourite method of bringing out a grave truth from a familiar colloquy.

“There was one Aristodemus, a little man, well known in Athens, not only as one who never either sacrificed to the gods or used divination, but as laughing and jeering at those who did so. This man Socrates one day happened to meet, and knowing his tendencies addressed him at once thus, Tell me, Aristodemus, are there any persons whom you admire particularly for their wisdom? That there are, he replied. Well, said Socrates, let me hear the names of a few. Homer, said the other, for epic poetry; Melanippides for dithyrambs; for tragedy, Sophocles;

for sculpture, Polycleitus; for painting, Zeuxis. Then tell me this, which is worthy of the greater admiration, the artist who makes figures which have neither life nor intelligence, or He who makes animals that have both life and intelligence? This artist, of course, said Aristodemus; for such animals would not be made by chance, but by calculation. Well then, of two classes of things, whereof the one has manifestly been constructed for some useful end, and the other, so far as one can see, for no end at all, which would you call the product of calculation? Of course the things made for some useful end. Now answer me this,—He who made men at first, and gave them senses to bring them into contact with the outward world, eyes to see and ears to hear, did He furnish them with these organs for a useful purpose or for no purpose at all? and as for odours and smells, if we had not nostrils, so far as we are concerned they might as well not have existed; and how could we have had any perception of sweet and sour, and all agreeable tastes, had we not been furnished with a tongue to take cognisance of such sensations? Observe further, how the eye, being naturally a tender organ, is supplied with eyelids as a house with a door, which may be opened to receive pleasant guests, and closed when danger approaches; the eye-lashes also manifestly serve as a sort of sieve to prevent the passage of any injurious particles which the wind might drive against the pupil, while the eyebrows form a sort of coping or fence which prevents the sweat from the forehead flowing into the organ of vision. Not less wonderful is it that the ear is so formed as to be able to take in an uncounted number of various sounds, and



yet is never filled ; and in the mouth we are instantly met with the remarkable fact in all animals, that, while the front teeth, which take up the food, are formed for cutting, the back teeth, which receive it from them, are adapted for the after operation of grinding ; observe also the situation of the great organ of nourishment, close to eyes and the nostrils, which keep a watch against the approach of unhealthy food ; while on the other hand, that part of the food which is useless for nutrition, being naturally offensive, is carried off by ducts and passages placed at as great a distance as possible from the organs of sensation. All these contrivances, so manifestly proceeding from a purpose, can we doubt whether we should call works of chance or of intellect ? Looking at the matter in this light, certainly, said the little man, I can have no hesitation in saying these are the contrivances of a very wise and benevolent designer. Consider further, continued Socrates, how there is implanted in all animals a desire of continuing their species, how the parents have a pleasure in breeding, and the offspring are above all things distinguished by the love of life and the fear of death. These also, he said, seem to be the contrivances of some Being who wished that animals should exist. Then, continued Socrates, consider yourself—do you believe that there is something in you which we call Intelligence ? and, if in you, whence came it ? is there no intelligence in the world outside of you ? Your body, you perceive, is made up of certain very small portions of solid and liquid elements, of which vast quantities exist beyond you, and of which your body is a part ; and if your body is taken from such a vast storehouse of matter, is your mind the only

part of you which is underived from any source, and which you seem to have snapped up somehow by good luck? and is it possible, or in any way conceivable, that all this gigantic and beautifully ordered form of things which we call the world should have jumped into its present consistency from mere random forces without calculation? Scarcely; but then I do not see the authors of the world as I do of works which men produce here. As little do you see your own soul, said Socrates, which yet is the lord of your body, so that, taking your own logic strictly, you must conclude that you do all things by chance and nothing by calculation. Well then, said Aristodemus, the fact is that I do not despise the Divine Power,<sup>1</sup> but I esteem all Divine natures too mighty and too glorious to require any service from me. For this reason rather they justly claim our regard, said Socrates, their might and their glory being the natural measure of the honour which they ought to receive from us. Well, be assured, Socrates, that if I could only imagine that the gods had any concern for us, I should not neglect them. And do you really mean to affirm that they actually have no concern for us? Why, consider what they have done for you; in the first place giving you an erect stature, which they gave to no other animal, a stature by virtue of which you not only see better before you, but can look upwards also, and defend yourself in many ways which with downcast eyes were impossible; and in the next place, not content with giving you feet, like other animals, they have fur-

<sup>1</sup> This seems the best way of translating the *τὸ δαίμονιον* in the mouth of Polytheists. It is a sort of vague step towards Monotheism.

nished you with hands also, the organs by which we practise most of those acts which manifest our superiority to them;<sup>1</sup> and, to crown all, while other animals have a tongue, man alone possesses this organ of such a nature that by touching the hollow of the mouth with it in various ways he can mould the emitted voice into articulate speech, significant of what thought wishes to communicate to thought. Again, the love which is a passion that stirs other animals only at certain seasons of the year, man is capable of enjoying at all seasons; and not only do our capacities of bodily efficiency and enjoyment so far surpass those of other animals, but God (ὁ Θεός) has implanted in man a soul of the most transcendent capacity. For what other animal, I ask, has a soul which enables it to own and to acknowledge the existence of the gods, who have disposed all this mighty order of things of which we are a part? What race of animals except man pays any worship to the gods?<sup>2</sup> What animal possesses a soul so fit as that of man to guard against the inclemencies of the weather, to prevent or cure disease, to train to bodily strength or to intellectual acuteness? and what animal when it has learned anything can retain the lesson with equal tenacity? Is it not rather plain that, compared with other animals, men live really as gods upon the earth, so strikingly superior

<sup>1</sup> As if it were the destiny of modern philosophers to pervert the wisdom of the ancients into ridiculous caricature, so we find in reference to this matter Helvetius in a well-known passage saying seriously that if horses had had hands they would have been men, and if men had had hoofs they would have been horses! In this way the ingenious fool always makes a knife out of every instrument to cut his own fingers.

<sup>2</sup> See this point stated more formally in Hegel, *Encyclopædie*, 50.

are they both in bodily and intellectual endowments ; for neither could a creature with man's reason, but with the body of an ox, have been able fully to execute its purposes ; nor, again, could a creature with human hands, but without human intellect, be able to go beyond the brute stage of animal life ; and after all this, heaped up as you are with bounties and blessings from all sides, will you still persist in thinking that you are a creature neglected by the gods ? What, I ask, do you expect them to do for you before they shall have any just claim to your regard ? I shall expect them, replied Aristodemus, to do for me what you say they do for you, to send me advisers as to what I ought to do and what I ought not to do. Be it so ; and do you think that your case is not already provided for, when the gods on being consulted through divination give an answer which concerns all Athenians ? or do you imagine when the Greeks, or the whole human race, are warned of coming evil by a portent, that you are specially excluded from the benefit of that divine indication ? Do you imagine that the gods would have implanted in all human breasts the feeling that they are able to do us good or evil, if they did not possess this power, or that men constantly being deceived by this notion would not by this time have discovered the delusion ? Have you not observed also that the wisest nations and the most stable governments are those which are the most religious, and that individual men are then most piously inclined when their reason is strongest and their passions most under control ? Believe me, my dear young friend, that as your soul within you moves and manages the body even as it wills, so we ought



to believe that the Intelligence which indwellesh the whole of things makes and designs all things according to its good pleasure, and not to imagine that while our human eye can reach many miles in vision, the Divine eye should not be able to see all things at a glance, nor that, while your soul can manage matters not here in Athens only, but in Egypt and Sicily, the intelligence of the Divine Being (*τοῦ Θεοῦ*) is not able to exercise a comprehensive care at once over the whole and each individual. In the same way therefore as by performing acts of kindness to men you come to learn those who are disposed to show kindness to you in return, and as by conferring with men on important matters you know who are able to give sound advice on such matters, if with this disposition you approach the gods, making trial of them if belike they are willing to reveal to you any of those things which are naturally unknown to men, then you will certainly learn by experience that the Divine nature (*τὸ θεῖον*) is of such a kind as to be able to see all things, and to hear all things, and to be everywhere present, and to have a providential care of all things."

So concludes this interesting dialogue, and the sympathetic reporter in winding it up adds, "The tendency of such discourses appears to me plainly to induce men to abstain from unholy and unjust and foul deeds, not only when they are seen of men, but also in a lonely wilderness, living constantly under the conviction that whatever men do, and in whatever place, they can in nowise escape the eye of the Omniscient."

Let us now make a few remarks on the theological argument, or the argument from design, here sketched

in such broad and masterly lines. It is an argument, when taken in the gross, and in its grand outline, so striking and so convincing, that it is only by confining the eye to a few minute and unessential points that certain precise and puzzling minds have conceited themselves that they were able to blunt the edge of its force. One class of objectors, unfortunately not at all uncommon in recent times, have imagined that they have refuted Paley's famous argument from the watch found on a waste heath, by saying that there is no analogy between a piece of human manufacture like a watch, and a living growth like a plant or an animal. Very true, so far; a growth is a growth, and a manufacture is a manufacture; the one possesses inherent divine vitality, the other no vitality at all; but what follows? Not that an animal and a plant have nothing in common, but only that they have not the principle of vitality in common; not that the animal may not be constructed on the same principles of design and adaptation on which the watch is constructed, but that the animal to the curious machinery has something superadded which we call life. The fact of the matter is, that Dr. Paley's argument would hold equally good if the designing soul that made the supposed watch, instead of being outside in the shape of a watch-maker, had been inside, as the principle of vitality is in a plant; then we should have called the watch a plant or an animal, and the design would have spoken out from its structure as manifestly as before. There is therefore no difference, so far as design and calculation are concerned, between a cunningly constituted growth and a curiously compacted machine. Another class of objectors are fond to tell us that things are not

what they are by virtue of any inherent calculated type, but by a combination of complex conditions and circumstances, which in the course of millions of millions of ages work themselves happily into a consistent organism. This is just Epicurus back again in his naked absurdity, almost indeed in the same senseless phraseology; as we may see, for instance, in the following passage from the *Westminster Review*, on which in the course of my reading I accidentally stumbled:—"The positive method makes very little account of marks of INTELLIGENCE; in its wider view of phenomena it sees that these incidents are a minority, and *may rank as happy coincidences*; it absorbs them in the singular conception of LAW." Let us attempt to analyse this utterance. It is the boast of the Comtian philosophy to find intelligence in the works of Auguste Comte, but not in the works of the Architect of the universe. Let that pass. In the next place it is indicated that it is a narrow view of things which discovers DESIGN in creation; a larger view reveals LAW; and the few incidents that may seem to indicate design are perhaps better explained by the old Epicurean method of the "fortuitous concurrence of atoms." Never was a greater amount of incoherence crammed into a short sentence. The inference which Dr. Paley drew from his watch is not in the least affected by the narrowness of the view which the inspection of a watch necessitates; nor would the striking evidence of a design in the structure of that little telescope the human eye, be diminished in the least by extending the view to the largest telescope ever made, or to the largest human body in the watch-tower of which a human eye was ever placed. The only legitimate consequence of

mounting from the contemplation of an eye, merely as an eye, to its consideration as part of a large organism called the human body, would be to increase admiration by the discovery that the little design of the instrument was subservient to the large design of the body, as if, after admiring a small chamber in a vast building, and praising the cunning of the architect, we should walk through the whole suite of rooms and then discover some new beauty in the chamber having reference to the great whole of which it was a part. But instead of this our author informs us that this wider view "absorbs the original feeling of design into the singular conception of LAW." Applied to the supposed case of the small chamber in the large palace, this is flat nonsense. For the "singular conception of LAW," in this case, is just the large plan of the whole building, which, along with the small plan of each part, proceeded from the comprehensive intellect of the architect. What is LAW? The reasoning in the above passage implies that it is something contrary to design, something that absorbs it, nay more, something that reduces it to the category of a "happy coincidence." But Law is only a steady self-consistent method of operation, which explains nothing; it is only a fact; and if in this method of operation there be manifest order and purpose of producing a reasoned and consistent result, the law then becomes a manifestation of design, as in the original application of the word to the work of a lawgiver, a Solon or a Lycurgus whose laws certainly implied a calculated purpose of reform and re-organization; or, to take again the watch, the law by which this tiny worker goes, is only the single word which describes that

ordered complex of calculated movements which the design of the maker puts into play, for the purpose of marking the regular lapse of time. The discovery of a great law, therefore, in an ordered and calculated system of things, such as the world, may enlarge the field in which design is exhibited, but, so far from absorbing, can only tend to make that design more prominent. So much for Comte. But what shall we say of Darwin? If that original and ingenious investigator of nature really does mean to say that there are no original types of things in the Divine mind (I use Platonic language purposely, because it is the only language that satisfies the demands of the case), and that a rose became a lily, or a lily a rose, by some external power called "natural selection,"—I reply that I shall believe this when I see it; that a modifying influence is one thing, and a plastic force another; and that, as an able Hegelian philosopher remarks,<sup>1</sup> a selection producing not a random but a reasonable result always implies some principle of selection, and a selecting agency—that is, the Socratic designing Intellect.

But there are greater names than those of Comte and Darwin, who have been quoted as oracular denouncers of all teleology—two of the greatest indeed of all modern names, Bacon and Goethe. The dictum of the great father of modern physical science, that teleology is a barren virgin, has been often repeated. Now, as Bacon was a pious man, at least a religious philosopher, he certainly cannot have meant Atheism by this; what then did he mean?

<sup>1</sup> Darwin, by the use of the term *selection*, turned *accident* into *design*, and was the first to do so.—Stirling on *Protoplasm* (Edinburgh, 1869), p. 69.

This question will be best answered by considering what Bacon's attitude as a philosopher was. He was not, like Aristotle, a calm judicial speculator, making a tabulated register of all knowledge; he was rather like Martin Luther, a man of war; and as the ecclesiastical reformer's life and doctrine derive all their significance from the abuses of the Papacy which they overthrew, so Bacon's position as a polemical thinker is to be interpreted only with reference to the school of thinking which he attacked. That school was a school fruitful in theories, discussions, and sounding generalities of all kinds, which afforded ample exercise to intellectual athletes, but produced no practical result. To put an end to this vague and unprofitable talk, the British Bacon, with the same practical instinct which guided the Attic Socrates, though in an opposite direction, set himself to establish a scientific method, a method specially calculated by the interrogation of nature to ascertain facts, and from the careful comparison of facts to educe laws. With these investigations into elementary scientific facts the general philosophical principle of final causes had nothing directly to do; nay, it might even act perniciously in an age which had not yet learned the art of careful experiment by accustoming men in an indolent sort of way to spin ingenious theories about the final causes of certain arrangements in the universe, before they had taken pains to ascertain what these arrangements actually were. And when we consider how vast a machine the Cosmos is, and how great the ignorance of us curious emmets who set ourselves to interpret its hieroglyphics, and to spell its scripture, it will be obvious that a warning against the ready luxury of speculating on final

causes was one of the most necessary utterances that might come from the mouth of a reformer of scientific method. However far men may rise through the long gradation of secondary causes up to the First Cause, and by the slow steps of progress which we call means to a final result, the preliminary question of course always is, *What are the facts?* and till these be accurately ascertained Bacon was fully justified in saying that speculation about final causes is a barren virgin and produces no offspring. But this wise abstinence from assigning final causes at any particular stage of physical research is a quite different thing from saying absolutely that there are no marks of design in the universe, and that those most obvious things which from Socrates downwards have been generally esteemed such, may in the phraseology of a higher philosophy "rank as happy coincidences." The humble admiration of final causes in the world by the intelligent worshipper is one thing, the hasty interpretation of them by every forward religionist is another thing. The works of God are not to be expounded, nor His ends and aims descanted on by every talker who may discourse with fluent propriety on the works of a human toy-maker like himself. Such we may feel confidently was Bacon's point of view in reference to teleological questions. As for Goethe, who was a scientific investigator of scarcely less note than a poet, his remark to Eckermann on this subject shows that his point of view was exactly the same. Not WHY, or FOR WHAT PURPOSE, or WITH WHAT OBJECT, he says, is the way of putting the question by which science may be profited; the true scientific question is always HOW. Of this there can be no doubt. "*Felix qui potuit rerum cognoscere*

*causas !*" the physical inquirer is primarily concerned to know—*how did this come about ?* by what curiously concatenated series of operations, starting from a certain point beyond which we cannot rise, are certain results produced ? Answer this and science is satisfied ; but in being so satisfied it proves itself to be a thing of secondary and ancillary significance, resting, like the mathematician's demonstrations, on principles which it belongs to a superior science to evolve. The whole doctrine of causes, efficient as well as final, belongs to philosophy, to that grand doctrine of fundamental realities which dictates to mere science both its starting-point and its goal. But not even in this view is it altogether correct to say that the consideration of design has nothing to do with purely scientific investigations, and by the purely scientific man had better be ignored. All we can say is, that it is better that it should be ignored in certain cases than falsely presumed. But in a world where everything is under the government of Law, which is merely the expression of reason and the manifestation of design, nothing could be more arbitrary and more perverse than the systematic exclusion of final causes from the philosophy of nature. So far from this, it is certain there can be no philosophy of nature without them ; if indeed atheism can be called a philosophy, and in this nineteenth century, Moses and Plato and the Apostle Paul may be cast from their throne to make way for a resuscitated Greek Epicurus in the person of a conceited French dogmatist ! We shall therefore conclude, in accordance with the teaching of Socrates, that an open eye for final causes not only belongs to wisdom, but may often advance science, when proceeding



cautiously upon the due observation and connexion of facts ; inasmuch as, in the words of an able metaphysician, "this universe is not an accidental cavity in which an accidental dust has been accidentally swept into heaps for the accidental evolution of the majestic spectacle of organic and inorganic life. That majestic spectacle is a spectacle as plainly for the eye of reason as any diagram of the mathematician. That majestic spectacle could have been constructed, was constructed, only in reason, for reason, and by reason ; and therefore everywhere, from the smallest particle, to the largest system, moulded and modelled and inhabited by DESIGN."<sup>1</sup>

The theological convictions of Socrates being so strong and so decided, it followed as a necessary consequence, in a person of so practical a character, that he should be a pious man, and that he should practise those rites and services by which the dependent position of man towards the gods is most naturally and effectively expressed. If man, as was taught in the above extract, is the only animal capable of religion, then the worship of the Supreme Intelligence becomes the peculiar sign, privilege, and glory of his humanity. An irreligious man, a speculative or practical atheist, is as a sovereign who voluntarily takes off his crown and declares himself unworthy to reign. Religious worship, therefore, being an act which a man is specially bound to perform in virtue of his humanity, neither Socrates nor any other pious heathen thinker could have any doubt as to the peculiar forms and ceremonies that ought to constitute this act. For all the heathens,—certainly

<sup>1</sup> Stirling on Protoplasm, p. 33. .

all Greeks and Romans,—held that religion was an essential function of the State, that Church and State, as we phrase it, are one and inseparable, consequently that every good subject owed allegiance to the religious traditions and observances of his countrymen, just as he did to the civil laws.<sup>1</sup> The gods were to be worshipped by every good citizen in every state,—*νόμος πόλεως*,—or, as we would say, according to the law of the land; and as the religions of Greece and Rome were not fenced with bristling dogmas in the shape of what we call a

<sup>1</sup> The opposite and characteristically modern view of the origin and character of religious duties may be stated most shortly in a sentence from a distinguished modern thinker :—

“If there be a God, then man bears relations to Him, and his duties to God are of a private nature, and therefore not of interest to the State, and in no way coming under the jurisdiction of Science. And what the duties are which man owes to God can only be ascertained by a *Revelation*, for they cannot be discovered experimentally.”

There are two propositions here essentially anti-Socratic, and, in my opinion, essentially false :—(1.) That religion belongs to man only as a private individual, and not as a citizen. This is a favourite idea of the most recent times, and has its only root in the fact that on account of the growth of a certain stout and stubborn individualism in Christian Churches it has been found practically impossible to make Christian men combine socially for the performance of any religious function. This difficulty, however, belongs not to the nature of religion, but to the imperfection of moral culture in our existing ethical associations called Churches. The social recognition of the Supreme Father still remains as much an ideal in modern times as it was a real in ancient times. The ancients sacrificed in this matter the individual to the State; we, for the glorification of the individual, allow the State to sit shorn of one of its greatest glories. Whatsoever a man is bound to do as a moral being individually, he is bound to do socially, *if it be possible*. The so-called Voluntary system is a mere shift to save the trouble and shirk the diffi-

Creed and Church Articles, but floated quite freely in the region of reverential tradition, while, at the same time, in those days, no man ever dreamed of having a religion for himself any more than of having a civil government for himself, the conformity even of great thinkers to the popular faith was not naturally accompanied by any taint of that species of insincerity which has so often attached to the subscription of modern articles of belief. The right culty which narrow-minded Christians feel in working together to give a national expression to common religious feelings and common religious convictions.

(2.) The second proposition here is, that religious duties can only be ascertained by Revelation, and come in no way under the jurisdiction of SCIENCE. To this Socrates answers that religious duties are three, *reverence*, *gratitude*, and *obedience*, and that the first two of these have their root in the commonest instincts and most rudimentary notions of reasonable beings, while the third, depending, as it does, partly on general science, partly on special intellectual culture, falls directly under the jurisdiction of Science. For to obey the laws of God we must know them, and we know them, as we know other things, by observation and reflection ; for they are not hidden, as some men count hidden, but written everywhere, both within us and without, in the most legible scripture, and pressed upon us daily by the most cogent arguments ; and no man can escape from their obligation. If by duties to God Mr. Gould understands only special religious observances as expressive of our religious sentiments and convictions, then no doubt it is quite true that these special forms of expression must either be revealed directly from Heaven, or vary considerably, according to the character and condition of the people who use them ; but such a narrowing of the idea of religious duty, confining it to the accidental instead of the essential, depriving it in fact of its soul and vital principle, is most unphilosophical ; and I am more willing to suppose that such a thoughtful writer as Mr. Gould should have been led astray by a fashionable phase of modern thought, than that he should be deliberately guilty of the impertinence of giving his readers the shell of a thing as its definition, when they had a right to look for the kernel.

of private judgment was exercised by the Greeks only in the domain of philosophical speculation ; for teaching the results of these speculations they established schools ; but the idea of protesting and dissenting and making a private business of religion, for the maintenance of certain ceremonies, forms of church-government, or favourite doctrines, could never have occurred to them. Neither are we to think it strange if, even as a matter of speculation, minds of great original power, like that of Socrates, should feel no intellectual repugnance to the main principles of a polytheistic faith. There is nothing fundamentally absurd in Polytheism, provided only a wise superintendent Providence be established somewhere to overrule the democratic assembly of subordinate gods ; and this the Greeks had prominently in the person of Zeus.<sup>1</sup> The other gods, like the angels in the Christian theology, however much their power might be exaggerated by the reverence of particular localities, were in the comprehensive survey of a philosophic mind only the ministers of his supreme will, working harmoniously along with him in the sustainment of the divine fabric of the universe. With this view of Polytheism, pious-minded men such as Socrates, Xenophon, and Plutarch could be perfectly satisfied ; and the extravagant and immoral stories about the gods, which excited the bile of Xenophanes and Plato, needed not necessarily to give them any offence. For why ? these stories were

<sup>1</sup> Since writing the above I have stumbled on an excellent passage on the inherent germ of Monotheism in Polytheism, contained in Baring Gould's *Development of Religious Belief*, vol. i. p. 268, etc. To the same purpose the reader may consult my notes on Homer's *Iliad*, viii. 2.

matter of popular belief, not of intellectual decision or of sacerdotal dictation. A great national poet, like Pindar, might explain, or explain away, in the public assembly of the Greeks, any legends that appeared to him to contain matter unworthy of his lofty conception of the gods. So of course might a philosopher like Socrates. The peasants round Athens believed that the Wind Boreas came down in human form, and carried off the nymph Oreithyia from the banks of the Ilissus; this might or might not be true; Socrates certainly was not bound to believe it; and, as he himself tells us in the *Phædrus*, he was too busy with more important matters to trouble himself with inquiring into the truth or falsehood of sacred legends in a country where every fountain had its peculiar worship, and every river its divine genealogy. This easy dealing with questions about legends, however, did not in the least imply any want of sincerity in the attitude of doubting thinkers towards the main articles of the Polytheistic creed; on the contrary, the more pliable the legend the less danger was there of its standing in the way of an honest acceptance of the broad fundamental points of the general creed; and it is an altogether gratuitous supposition in a late distinguished writer<sup>1</sup> to suppose that when Socrates at his death gave as a dying injunction to his friends to sacrifice a cock, which he had vowed, to *Æsculapius*, he did this merely from the effect of habit, and that he really did not believe in the existence of the god whom the injunction immediately concerned. While the general evidence of the adherence of Socrates both

<sup>1</sup> Baring-Gould on the *Development of Religious Belief* (London, 1869), p. 124.

in theory and practice to the popular creed is so strong, we have no right in any particular instance to set him down as insincere. Of his general sincerity on these matters there certainly can be no doubt. It is set forth distinctly in more than one dialogue of Xenophon, and harmonizes exactly with all that we read in Plato. The philosopher used the common kinds of divination practised by his countrymen, and gave special directions as to the subjects on which a wise man should consult the gods, and on which he should seek for direction from them rather than from his own reason. We have special testimony to the fact that on one occasion (see above, page 11) he, after a long period of pious meditation, offered up a prayer to the Sun ; and one of the Platonic dialogues concludes with a prayer of Socrates in the following curt and significant style:—

“O dear Pan, and ye other gods who frequent this spot, grant me, in the first place, to be good within; and as for outward circumstances, may they be such as harmonize well with my inward capacities. Grant me ever to esteem the wise man as the alone wealthy man ; and as for gold, may I possess as much of it as a man of moderate desires may know to use wisely.’

So much for the theological belief and unaffected piety of this great man. How intimately he held Religion and Morality to be bound together will best appear from the following dialogue with the Sophist Hippias, on the foundation of natural right and positive law. We give it at length, as it has a direct bearing on some fundamental principles of general jurisprudence which have been largely debated in this country, from Locke down to Bentham and Mill.

“Is it not strange, Hippias, said Socrates, that

when a man wishes to have his son taught shoemaking or carpentry or any trade, he has no difficulty in finding a master to whom he may send him for instruction? nay, I have even heard that there are training masters who will teach a horse or an ox to do what they ought to do. But if I wish for myself, or my son or my servant, to know the principles of what is right and just, I look in vain for any source whence I might get instruction in these important matters. There you are, said Hippias (who had just returned to Athens after a long absence)—there you are saying exactly the same things that you were saying when I left you! Very true, said Socrates, and not only do I say the same things always, but always about the same things, while you, I presume, on account of your multiform knowledge, on no occasion require to repeat any old truths. Well, I readily confess that I always prefer, when I can, to bring out something new. Do you then mean to say that even when you know a thing thoroughly, and have occasion to speak about it frequently, you can always continue to say something new? as, for example, if any one were to ask you with how many letters to spell Socrates, would you give one reply to-day and another to-morrow? or again, if he should ask if twice five are ten, or any other question of arithmetic, would you give different answers at different times? With regard to matters of that kind, O Socrates, there can be no variation; but with regard to what is JUST and RIGHT a man may constantly make new discoveries, as I think I am in a condition to say something on that subject to-day, to which neither you nor any man in Athens could put in a demurrer. Now, by Hera! said

Socrates, if you have really discovered anything important in this province, any charm that might save a jury from the pain of giving a divided verdict, or good citizens from the necessity of brawling and wrangling with one another, or mighty States from ruining each other by wars, you have made a discovery indeed for which I envy you—and I really do not know how I can let you quit me at present till I have drawn from you the secret of this discovery. That you shall not do, by Jove! said the Sophist, before you first tell me what your own views are on the subject of RIGHT; for this is an old trick of yours, by captious questions to worm answers out of other people, and laugh at them when they are made to contradict themselves, while you refuse to stand question, or pronounce a definite opinion on any point. How can you say this, O Hippias, when you perceive that I am continually employed in doing nothing but bringing to light my notions on right and wrong? In what discourse did you bring this to light, O Socrates? If not in a set discourse, replied the philosopher, certainly by actions; or do you not think that a deed is a much more effective way of declaring a man's moral principles than a word? More effective unquestionably; for of those who say what is just many do what is unjust; but if a man's actions are just there is no injustice in him. Well then, Hippias, I ask you, did you ever know me either bearing false witness or playing the informer, or exciting discontent among the people, or doing any other wrong action? Certainly not. But is not abstaining from what is wrong the definition of what is right? There you are again! said Hippias; I catch you in the act; you are



wriggling cunningly out of the position, and instead of telling me what just men do, you tell me what they don't do. I did so because I honestly thought that to abstain from all unjust deeds was a sufficient proof of the existence of justice in the breast of the actor. But if a negative answer does not satisfy you, then take this—I say that Right is conformity to the laws (*τὸ νόμιμον δίκαιον εἶναι*). Do you then literally mean to say that Right and Law are identical? I do. Well, then, I must tell you, in the first place, that I do not understand what you mean by Law and Right. You know the laws of the State, I presume? Of course. What then are the laws of the State? The laws of the State, said he, are all the enactments which the people have made when they have agreed among themselves as to what things ought to be done and what things ought not to be done. Then, said Socrates, that person would act according to law who obeyed those enactments, and he would be a lawless person who transgressed them? Unquestionably. Then I presume the man who did according to law would act according to right, while the man who transgressed the law would do wrong? Of course. Then you admit that the man who observes law, and the just man, or the man who acts according to right, are identical, and the transgressor of law and the unjust man in the same way? This sounds very well, said Hippias; but how can rectitude, or right, be measured by the standard of laws which the very persons who make them are often the first to repudiate,—enacting the exact contrary? That is not so very strange, said Socrates, for the same parties who declare war to-day may

make peace to-morrow. Of course they may, he replied. Well, then, I do not comprehend with what distinction you maintain that, whereas persons who observe the rights of war to-day and the rights of peace to-morrow are not charged with inconsistency, persons obeying any other laws to-day which may be reversed to-morrow are chargeable with unsettling the principles of right; or do you really mean to stand up as a universal peacemonger, and to say that those who serve their country well in war are guilty of a crime? Far from it, said he. Right, said Socrates; for obedience to the laws is really in every good citizen the one thing needful; and Lycurgus, the famous Spartan, would have been not a whit better than other legislators had he not by his institutions worked into the very blood of the people a habit of obedience to the laws; and is it not plain that in all States those governors are universally esteemed the best who know how best to make their laws obeyed, and that the State where the habit of obedience is most confirmed is always the most prosperous in peace and the most invincible in war? Nay more, is not concord universally praised as the greatest good of States, and do not our venerable senators and our best leaders of the people continually exhort men to this virtue? and is it not a fact that in every Greek State there is a special oath taken by the citizens that they will cultivate concord, and above all things shun strife and sedition among themselves? Now I do not conceive that in the prominence thus given to concord it was held forth as desirable that all the citizens should be of the same mind with regard to choruses or flute-players or poets and their performances, but what was intended is that the citizens

should above all things obey the laws : for so long as these are generally acknowledged, States will be strong and prosperous, but without concord neither house nor family can stand. Each individual also of a community can thrive only in this way ; the man who obeys the laws will always incur less loss and gain more honour than the lawless man ; and in the courts, having the law on his side, he will more readily gain his case. And to whom, I ask, would you intrust your property, or your son, or your wife, preferably to the man who fears to violate the laws ? in whom will the public authorities more readily confide ? From whom more than from the observer of the laws may parents or relations, or friends or citizens or guests, reasonably expect to receive their due ? to whom would enemies rather commit the negotiation of truces and treaties ? with whom preferably would any State wish to form an alliance ? to whom would his allies with greater security intrust the defence of any position, or the command of any detachment ? from whom would a benefactor sooner expect to receive a grateful return for the benefit conferred ? whom would a man sooner choose for his friend, and more wisely shun as an enemy ? In every situation of life the man who respects law is the person whom one would be most benefited by having for his friend, and most damaged by having for his enemy ; and, on these grounds, I consider myself justified in concluding generally, O Hippias, that the man who obeys the law, and the just man, or the man who does the right, is one and the same character ; and if you have any objections to this doctrine, I should like much to hear them. By Jove ! said Hippias, I think I am not able to

state any valid objections to what you have said ! Tell me, O Hippias, did you ever hear of what we might call UNWRITTEN LAWS ? Yes ; those laws I presume you mean which are the same in all countries. Can we say, then, do you imagine, that men made such laws ? How could that be ? men could neither come together for such a purpose, nor, if they did, could they ever agree. Who, then, do you think laid down these laws ? In my opinion, the gods ; for amongst all men the universal instinct is to acknowledge the gods. Reverence to parents, I presume, falls under the same category—for this is a universal practice. I agree. Then shall we say that the gods are also the authors of the law forbidding sexual intercourse between parents and their offspring ? No ; I cannot call this a law coming directly from the gods. Why not ? Because I see certain men transgressing this law ; it is not universal. But the transgression of a law does not make it less a law ; men break many laws ; but in the case of the divine laws a penalty waits on the transgressor which it is impossible to escape, as men may, and not seldom do, escape the consequences of violated human laws, whether by persistently undermining or violently overriding them. But what penalty, O Socrates, I should like to know, do parents and children incur who practise incestuous intercourse ? The greatest of all penalties, the begetting of children in a bad way. But how bad ? for being good themselves, that is in good health and of a good stock, what comes from good must of necessity be good. But you forget, rejoined Socrates, that in the procreation of children we must consider not only the original goodness of the stock, but also

that the bodies of both individuals concerned in the act should be in their prime ; or do you perhaps imagine that from unripe bodies, or bodies sinking into decay, an equally vigorous and healthy seed can flow, as from those which are in their best condition ? Certainly not, said Hippias. Then it is plain, said Socrates, that the offspring of such intercourse would not be procreated under favourable natural conditions, and according to the unwritten law of nature are for this reason bad and wrong. Take now another instance : ingratitude, I presume, you will grant is always and everywhere wrong, while to repay kindness by kindness is everywhere an act in harmony with law. Certainly ; but this law also is frequently transgressed. Yes ; and the transgression brings with it its own punishment, in that the violators of this law are at once deprived of good friends, and forced to cultivate the goodwill of those who they know must hate them ;—for are not those who confer benefits on their friends good friends, and do not those who never return obligations to such friends, make themselves hated by them, while, at the same time, on account of the benefits which may accrue from such connexion, they are obliged to go on courting those very persons by whom they are hated ? Now, by Jove, said Hippias, I must confess that here I do see plain traces of a divine law ; for that laws should bring along with them their own penalty when broken, is a most rare device, to which no mere human legislator has ever yet been able to attain. Well then, Hippias, do you think that the gods, when they make laws, make them in accordance with right, or with what is contrary to right ? Not with what is contrary, assuredly ;

for if laws are to be made in accordance with absolute right, the gods are the only powers that can make them perfectly. And so, Hippias, to finish our long discourse, we conclude that **WITH THE GODS LAW AND RIGHT ARE IDENTICAL.**"

Now, without maintaining the perfect propriety or sufficiency of all the examples put forward in this argument, the general principles of it state the fundamental axioms of moral philosophy in a way which might have saved a certain modern school of ethical writers volumes of ingenious sophistry, if they had but possessed the natural amount of reverence and knowledge which would have enabled them to appreciate what was good and true in the discourses of the great fathers of their own science. For the unwritten laws whose authority the Athenian evangelist here so eloquently asserts, in goodly harmony with the noble Hebrew prophet (Jeremiah xxxi. 33) before him, and the heroic apostle of the Gentiles (Romans ii. 15) four centuries and a half later, are just the natural and necessary fruit of those innate human actions and divinely implanted instincts in the region of emotion and volition, which Locke, in an evil day for British philosophy, thought it incumbent on him to deny, and by the denial of which a whole school of meagre moralists, from Hume to John Stuart Mill, have either dragged themselves ingloriously in the mire, or entangled themselves in a tissue of the sorriest sophistries. In this dialogue also we see how ably the common sense of the great logical missionary of Greece fought its way through that most inconclusive argument against the immutability of moral distinctions derived from the strange and abnormal habits of certain savage tribes.

A law is not the less a law, replied Socrates to the sophistical Hippias, because it may be sometimes or frequently transgressed ; and a divine instinct is not the less divine because there are found false instincts and morbid sensibilities in individual men, or even in whole tribes. The type of any race of animals is not to be taken from monsters, nor is the law of the variations of the magnetic needle near ferruginous rocks or in an iron vessel to be paraded as a proof that there is no such thing as magnetic polarity. According to the argument of Socrates, as Aristotle also teaches, the aberrations from the norm of human morality in certain persons or tribes, which so confounded Locke, are no more to be held as arguments against the eternity of innate moral distinctions than the existence of sporadic disease or degenerated types of body can be considered as disproving the fact of health, or the braying of an incidental ass, or even a troop of asses, can be taken as a refutation of one of Beethoven's symphonies.

On the political opinions and conduct of Socrates a very few words will suffice. We have seen above (p. 14) that, like the apostle Paul, and the preachers of the gospel generally, he kept himself out of all political entanglement ; nevertheless as a notable and prominent citizen in what, notwithstanding its great celebrity, we cannot but call a small democratic State, he could not avoid occasionally talking on subjects of public interest, and giving his opinion freely on the conduct of public men. To have done otherwise indeed would have been to have imposed silence on himself in regard to not a few matters which belonged as much to his moral mission as anything that concerned the conduct of private

individuals; it would have been also to incur the charge of apathy, indifference and cowardice, than which nothing could have been more hurtful to his influence as a moral teacher. Accordingly, in the book of Xenophon there are not wanting indications of his political tendencies, which we shall here attempt summarily to state.

His fundamental position in regard to all political duties was, as we may have gathered from the conversation with Hippias, the supreme obligation on every good citizen to obey the existing laws. In this sacred, and sometimes, one might feel inclined to think, over scrupulous reverence for law, he agrees with the apostle Paul, but runs directly counter to the received maxims of all democracy, both ancient and modern; for reverence is not an emotion which democracy cherishes; and an impassioned majority is apt to consider every law a usurpation, which applies a drag to its impetuosity or a bridle to its wilfulness.

Whether he was in heart a republican after the Attic type, like Aristotle, or, like his illustrious disciples Plato and Xenophon, cherished a reactionary partiality for the Spartan or monarchico-aristocratic form of government, is difficult to say. Certainly in the *Memorabilia* there is nothing that savours of an admiration of absolutism, or a blind reverence for Sparta; and though there was in his time a current notion—arising out of recent political misfortunes—that the Athenian character had degenerated, we find him, in a remarkable conversation with young Pericles, rather disposed to vindicate than to exaggerate the faults of his democratic fellow-citizens. At the same time, it is quite certain that as a philosopher, and a man free to look at



public affairs from an impartial position, he did not approve of certain principles fondly cherished in the practice of the democracy of which he was a member. If therefore in his heart he wished a democracy at all, he must have wished it, as Aristotle also did, under those checks, and with that tempering admixture of the aristocratic element which would constitute it what Aristotle calls a *πολιτεία*, and what we should call a moderate republic, or a popular government not founded on mere liberty and equality, and not subject to the overbearing sway of a mere numerical majority. For in the existing democracy of Athens we find him attributing the military mishaps of his countrymen to the circumstance that their officers had no professional training, and the generals of the army were in fact for the most part extemporized.<sup>1</sup> This was no doubt a very vulnerable point of the democracy; for we find Philip of Macedon in the next century telling the Athenians sarcastically that they were surely a very wonderful people, inasmuch as they found ten generals to elect every year, whereas he in his whole life had been able to find only one, Parmenio. And in the same spirit the pungent father of the Cynics had told them, after a general election, that they had better go and vote publicly that asses were horses, which would certainly be more reasonable than to vote that certain persons whom they had just stamped with the title of generals were soldiers. As little could Socrates, as a thinking man, and a man of lofty self-reliance, with a more than common amount

<sup>1</sup> This was written twelve months before the startling events of the late Franco-German war brought the deficiencies of our British military system so prominently into public view.

of moral courage, approve either of the democratic device of choosing important public officers by the blind chance of the ballot, or of that unreasoned usage of all democracies, that a mixed multitude, huddled into the vote, under the influence of sudden passion or subtle intrigue, shall, by a mere numerical majority, decide on the most critical questions, which require comprehensive survey, cool decision, and impartial judgment. Again, as a man of truth, he had a special objection to the method of governing in democracies by pandering to the prejudices of the people rather than by opposing them; and above all things he hated, and was constantly denouncing and exposing, that meretricious and essentially hollow oratory which the man of the people always must practise when the electors, on whose favour he is dependent, have their opinions dictated by local interests and personal passions, rather than by large considerations of public right and the general good. Lastly, as a moralist, he knew that there is no bait more seductive to the human mind than the love of power; to this strong passion democracy applies a constant and potent stimulus; and thus acts directly in bringing the worst and not the best men into situations of public influence and trust; for good men are modest, and more apt to feel the responsibilities than to covet the advantages of political power. Thus far Socrates was decidedly, if not anti-republican, at least anti-democratic; but we must bear in mind also that he and, we may add, all the wise Greeks were equally or even more opposed to the cold selfishness of a narrow oligarchy governing for their own aggrandizement; and that, like every man with Hellenic blood in his veins, he had an instinctive hatred of

tyranny and oppression in every shape ; and proved this, as Xenophon informs us, in the most decided way, by publicly bearding two of the thirty tyrants, and pursuing quietly his labours of love in their despite.

The prosecution and death of Socrates, which we must now sketch, is one of the most interesting events in history,—useful also in a special degree as a warning to that large class of persons who are inclined to follow the multitude in all things, with unlimited faith in the motto *VOX POPULI VOX DEI*. Never did a people, in this case a particularly shrewd and intelligent people, cased in the hard panoply of unreasoned tradition, under the distorting influence of prejudice, the exaggerations of personal spite, and the smooth seductions of popular oratory, commit an act of more daring defiance to every principle of truth and justice. Happily we possess evidence of the most distinct and indubitable description with regard both to the nature of the charges brought against the philosopher and the delusions which blinded his judges. In reference to the first point, we have the very words of the indictment, given in the same terms by both Plato and Xenophon. With regard to the second point, wherein the real key to his condemnation lies, we have an ancient comedy—the *Clouds* of Aristophanes—in which the state of public feeling and popular prejudice in Athens in reference to the philosopher is brought as vividly before us as if it had been a matter of yesterday. In this play—one of the wisest certainly, and one of the most humorous, that ever was written—Socrates is put forward as representing the Sophists ; and a picture is drawn of that class of persons, calculated to stir up a whole host

of indignant feelings, patriotic and personal, against the philosopher. No doubt the whole affair, so far as Socrates was concerned, was a tissue of the grossest lies; but neither those whose business it is to make jokes for the public, nor the public, who find their pleasure in these jokes, have ever displayed any very scrupulous care in sifting the materials of their mirth. A popular comedy on any event of the day is popular, not because it is true, but because it cleverly tricks out that view of the matter which the multitude delights to think is true; it is the proper pabulum of popular prejudice; and as such there can be no doubt that the gross caricature of Socrates represented in Athens 423 B.C. with great applause, was one of the principal feeders of those local feelings and prejudices by which, twenty-three years afterwards, the great preacher of righteousness was condemned. For we must bear in mind that Socrates was not condemned by a bench of cool lawyers, such as decide cases of heresy in the English Church, but by a jury or popular assembly, most of whom had already prejudged the case; and trial by jury, as large experience in this country has shown, may as readily be made the willing instrument of popular passion, as the strong bulwark against autocratic or oligarchic oppression. And all these sources of evidence bring us to a conclusion which agrees exactly with what might *a priori* have been predicated from what we know both of the special proclivities of the Athenian people and the general tendencies of human beings, when acting in masses, under the spur of great political or religious excitement.

To state the matter more articulately, the view of the philosopher's guilt taken by his accusers and the



majority of the jury who condemned him, may be comprised under the following five points :—

(1.) Sócrates was one of the Sophists; and to the superficial undistinguishing eye of the general public of Athens, like any other public, constitutionally impatient of distinctions, it was as natural to confound the philosopher with his antagonists as it was to Tacitus and other intelligent Romans to confound the first Christians with their greatest enemies, the Jews. Whatever odium therefore in public estimation attached to the profession and principles of a Sophist, necessarily attached to Socrates, as one of the most prominent of the class. He was accordingly assumed to be guilty under the following heads of offence, all of which were truly applicable to the majority of the class of men with whom he was identified.

(2.) The Sophists generally did not believe in the gods of their country, and, more than that, they were sceptical, and even atheistical, in their whole tone and attitude.

(3.) They did not believe in the immutability of moral distinctions, teaching that all morality is based on positive law, custom, fashion, association, or habit.

(4.) And their profession of these principles was the more dangerous, that it was supported by a specious and plausible art of logic and rhetoric, of which the professed object was, with an utter disregard of truth, to make the worse appear the better reason.

(5.) The natural and actual effect of this teaching was to corrupt the youth and undermine both domestic and civic morality.

This is the full view of the case, as one may gather it from the whole pleadings; but more definitely and succinctly the actual indictment is given by Xenophon in this single sentence:—  
“SOCRATES BEHAVES WRONGFULLY IN NOT ACKNOWLEDGING THOSE AS GODS WHOM THE STATE HOLDS TO BE GODS, AND IN INTRODUCING NEW GODS OF HIS OWN; HE ACTS WRONGFULLY ALSO IN CORRUPTING THE YOUTH.”

Now the first question which arises on this charge is, whether such a prosecution, according to the law of Athens, was justifiable at all; and on this head we are happy to agree with the view of the case so ably stated by Professor Zeller in his excellent work on the Philosophy of the Greeks. The prosecution, we think, was not justifiable; that is, even though the points had been proven, there was no indictable offence. For though unquestionably both by Hellenic and Roman law a public action lay in theory against all who did not acknowledge the gods of the country, and no man was entitled to entertain private gods without State authority; and though as a matter of fact several eminent persons, such as Anaxagoras and Diagoras, had even in the lifetime of Socrates been tried and banished for the offence of impiety, yet the spirit of toleration was now so large, and the license everywhere assumed had been so great, that to condemn an honest thinker to death for simple heterodoxy, in the year 399 B.C., in Athens, was altogether inexcusable, and could be attributed only to intense personal spite on the part of his prosecutors, and to the crassest prejudice on the part of the jury who tried him.

But the case assumes a much more serious aspect,

when it stands proven in the most distinct terms that, even had the prosecution in point of legal practice been justifiable, the defendant as a matter of fact was entirely innocent of all the charges in the indictment. Of this ample evidence shines out in almost every page of the above sketch; and more may be found by whoso cares to seek in almost every chapter of Xenophon. There is no philosopher of antiquity in whom a cheerful piety, according to the traditions of his country, and a reasonable morality, were so happily combined. In this view he stands out in remarkable completeness when compared whether with Confucius in the far east, or with Aristotle in his own country. He stands also as a representative man in this respect above Plato, and incarnates fully both the piety and the philosophy of Athens, just as Chalmers was the incarnation of the religion, the science, the fervour and the practical sagacity of Scotland. Plato, on the other hand, though a man of profound piety, as a transcendental speculator was too lofty in his point of view to be able to reconcile himself to the familiar and sensuous theology of Homer; while Aristotle was defective altogether in the emotional part of his nature, and, like a true encyclopædist, was content to register the gods whom he had not the heart to worship. As to the new gods whom Socrates was said to have introduced, this charge could only have arisen from some gross popular blunder about the *δαίμων* or genius by whom he used to assert his conduct was often guided. What this *δαίμων* really was we shall see by and by; but even had it been a real familiar spirit, as was crudely supposed, there was nothing in the idea of such spiritual intercourse contrary to the

orthodox conceptions of heathen piety. The third charge against him of corrupting the youth, was merely an application of the charge of irreligion, with the obvious intention of rousing the tender apprehensions of Athenian fathers who believed in the stout old Marathonian sturdiness, and hated the subtle glibness of the rising generation; for in fact, like the late distinguished Baron Bunsen, Socrates was peculiarly the friend of young men, and specially zealous for their good. The answer to such a charge was plain, and was similar to that which might have been made by the Methodists of the last century, when they were charged with leading away the people from the Established Church: If you, the Churchmen, had taken care of the people in the remote corners of Cornwall and Wales, we certainly should never have interfered. So Socrates might well ask his accusers, as we find in Plato's Apology he did: "*If I corrupt the young men, who improves them?*" It was simply because there was no person who cared to instruct them in the principles of right that there was room for me to come forward as a teacher at all. Your accusation of me is a proof that you neglected your own work." Why then, we are now prepared to ask, was he condemned? The answer to this is unfortunately only too obvious. The causes of his condemnation were five:—

(1.) Because his freedom of speech as a preacher of righteousness had made him not a few enemies in influential quarters. Though entirely free from every taint of bitterness or ill-will, and even playfully tolerant to human weaknesses, the very reverse, as we have seen, of a modern Calvin, the moment an argument was started he spared no party, who, by



the application of the searching logical test, was found to be a dealer in hollow superficialities or pretentious shams; poets, orators, and politicians equally were made to feel the keen edge of his reproof. Against all and each of these he had spoken more truth than they could easily bear; and of that dangerous seed he was now to reap the natural fruit. Truth, which was a jewel of great price to him, was a nauseous drug to many; and the man who administered it could not be looked on with friendly eyes. "*Am I become your enemy because I tell you the truth?*" was the question directed more than four hundred years afterwards by the great apostle of the Gentiles to some of his perverted churches. So it was also in the days of Socrates, and so it must ever be. Men are by nature not lovers of truth, in the first place, but lovers of themselves, of their own wishes, of their own fancies, of their own belongings. To become lovers of the pure truth they must undergo a process of moral and intellectual regeneration—the new birth of oriental philosophy and of evangelical doctrine.

(2.) Because the religious antipathies of an orthodox public (and the Athenians prided themselves specially on their religiousness) towards a person accused of heterodoxy, scepticism, and atheism are so strong as readily to overbear any evidence that may be adduced to prove the personal piety, and even the literal orthodoxy, of the accused party.

(3.) Because in a democracy, where the judges, or, as we would say, the jury, are a mixed multitude of ignorant and prejudiced people, such motives are apt to be particularly strong.

(4.) Because Socrates, as a man of high principle,

and of a perhaps over-strained sense of honour, would not condescend to use any of those intrigues, tricks, and supple artifices which are often applied successfully to overcome the prejudices of an adverse jury. Nay, his attitude seemed more that of a man willing to find in death a noble opportunity for putting a seal upon the great work of his life. He pleaded his own case, which no prudent man does who is anxious merely to gain his case; and his speech is rather a proud assertion of himself against his judges than a politic deprecation of their displeasure.

(5.) Because, no doubt, a certain excitement of the public mind arising out of the troubles of the recent revolutionary government established by the Spartans, and the restoration of the democracy by Thrasybulus, was favourable to the bringing of a charge against a person belonging to a class generally suspected by the people, and one who had unquestionably at times spoken his mind freely enough on the defects, absurdities, and blunders of the local democracy. This political element may certainly have helped; but the charge against the philosopher was not mainly—formally indeed not at all—political, as the pleadings both in Xenophon and Plato sufficiently show.

Taking all these things together, remembering how many follies and ferocities have everywhere been perpetrated in the name of religion, and impressed with the full force of what the poet says of the reward wont to be paid by the world to persistent speakers of truth—

“Die wenigen die von der Wahrheit was erkannt  
Und thöricht genug ihr volles Herz nicht wahrten  
Dem Pöbel ihr Gefühl, ihr Schauen offenbarten  
Hat man von je gekreuzigt und verbrannt,”—

some persons may perhaps feel inclined to think with Mr. Grote that "the wonder rather is that the wise man was not prosecuted sooner. It was only the extraordinary toleration of the Greek people that prevented this." There is a great amount of truth in this remark; but the exercise of polytheistic toleration in the case of Socrates was rendered more easy by the undoubted innocency of the accused, and the host of friends whom his wisdom and goodness had created for him as his champions. Had Socrates really been as heterodox in Athenian theology as Michael Servetus was in the theology of the Christian world at the period when, in harmony with universal European law, he was burnt by the Genevese Calvinists, we might then have drawn a contrast between monotheistic intolerance and polytheistic toleration in two perfectly similar cases; but as matters really stand, while the execution of Servetus was only a great legal and theological mistake, the death of Socrates must be stamped by the impartial historian as a great social crime. It was equally against local law and human right, a rude invasion of blind prejudice, overbearing insolence, and paltry spite against the holiest sanctities of human life.

The details of the death of Socrates, sketched with such graceful power and kindly simplicity by Plato in the concluding chapters of the *Phædo*, are well known; but the present paper would seem imperfect without some glimpse of that last and most beautiful scene of the philosopher's career. We shall therefore conclude with that extract; and to make the picture of his last days as complete as possible, introduce it by an extract from Plato's *Apology*, in which the dignified self-reliance and serene courage of the sage

is described with all that rich fulness and easy grace of which the writer was so consummate a master :—

“ I should have done what was decidedly wrong, O Athenians, if, when the archons whom you elected ordered me, at Potidæa, at Amphipolis, and at Delium, to accept the post given me in the war, and stand where I was ordered to stand at the risk of death,—if then, I say, I had not obeyed the command, and exposed my life willingly for the good of my country ; but when the order comes from a god—as I had the best reason to believe that a god did order me to spend my life in philosophizing, and in proving myself and others, whether we were living according to right reason,—if in such circumstances I should now, from fear of death, or from any other motive, leave my post, and become a deserter, this were indeed a sin ; and for such an offence any one might justly bring me before this court on a charge of impiety, saying that I had disobeyed the voice of the god by flinching from death, and conceiting myself to be wise when I was not wise. For to be afraid of death, O Athenians, is in fact nothing else than to seem to be wise when a man is not wise : for it is to seem to have a knowledge of things which a man does not know. For no man really knows whether death may not be to mortal men of all blessings perhaps the greatest ; and yet they do fear it, as if they knew that it is the greatest of evils. And how, I ask, can this be other than the most shameful folly to imagine that a man knows what he does not know ? or perhaps do I differ from most other men in this, and if I am wiser at all than any one, am I wiser in this, that, while not possessing any exact knowledge of the state of matters in Hades, I do not

imagine that I possess such knowledge ; but as to right and wrong, I know for certain, that to disobey a better than myself, whether man or god, is both bad and base. On no account therefore will I ever fear and seek to avoid what may or may not be an evil, rather than that which I most certainly know to be bad ; in so much that if, on the present occasion, you should be willing to acquit me, and refuse to listen to Anytus, who maintained that I either should never have been brought before you at all, or you could not do otherwise than condemn me to death, because your sons, putting in practice the lessons of Socrates, must needs go on without redemption to their ruin—if, notwithstanding this declaration of my prosecutor, you should still be unconvinced, and say—O Socrates, for the present we discharge you, but on this condition, that for the future you shall not go on philosophizing and proving, as you have hitherto done ; and, if you are caught doing so, then you shall die—if on these conditions you were now willing to acquit me, I should say to you, O Athenians, that, while I cherish all loyal respect and love for you, I choose to obey the gods rather than men, and so long as I live and breathe I will never cease philosophizing and exhorting any of you with whom I may happen to converse, and addressing him as I have been wont, thus,—O my excellent fellow-citizen, the citizen of a State the most famous for wisdom and for resources, is it seemly in you to feel no shame if, while you are spending your strength in the accumulation of money, and in the acquisition of civic reputation, you bestow not the slightest pains to have your soul as well furnished with intelligence as your life is with prosperity ? And if any man to

this question should reply, that, so far as he is concerned, he really does bestow as much care on wisdom as on wealth, then I will not forthwith let him go, but will proceed, as I was wont, to interrogate, and to prove, and to argue ; and if, as the result of the discussion, he shall appear to me not to possess virtue, but merely to say that he possesses it, I will then go on to reprove him in that by his deeds he prefers what is base to what is noble, and foolishly sets the highest value upon that which has the least worth. And in this wise I will speak to every man whom I shall converse with, be he citizen, or be he stranger, and the rather if he be a fellow-citizen to whom I am bound by nearer and more indissoluble ties. For this is precisely what I am commanded to do by the god ; and if the god did indeed give forth this command, then must I distinctly declare that no greater blessing could be to this city than that, so long as I do live, I should live to execute the divine command. For what I do day after day treading your streets is simply this, that, speaking to both young and old, I exhort them not to seek in the first place money or anything material, but to stretch every nerve that their soul may be as excellent as possible ; for that virtue and all excellence grow not from gold, but rather that gold and all things truly good, both in private and public life, grow to men from the possession of virtue as the root of all good. If by preaching this doctrine I corrupt the youth, let such teaching be declared corrupt : but if any one asserts that I teach other doctrine than this, he is talking unreason. Therefore, O Athenians, do as seemeth you good ; listen to Anytus, or listen to him not ; acquit me or acquit me not, I can do no otherwise than

I have done, though I should die a hundred times.

*(At these words murmurs of dissent and disapprobation are heard from the jury.)*

“Be not surprised, O Athenians, nor express displeasure at what I have said ; listen rather and hear, for you will be the better and not the worse for anything that I have said, and I have some other things to say also of a nature to bring out similar expressions of your dissent ; but hear me, I beseech you, with patience. This I must plainly tell you, that if you put me to death, being such an one as I have described, and doing such things as I do, you will not hurt me so much as you will hurt yourselves ; or, more properly speaking, no man can hurt me, neither Anytus nor Meletus nor any one else ; for it is not in the nature of things that a better man should receive essential harm from a worse. No doubt a worse man may kill me, or banish me, or brand me with statutable infamy—evils these the greatest possible in the estimation of some, but not certainly in my conviction, who hold the greatest infamy to be even that which this man has brought upon himself, in that wrongfully he endeavours to take away the life of his fellow. I am not therefore, in making this present defence, pleading my own cause so much as speaking in your behalf, O Athenians, lest ye should be found sinning against the god in condemning a just man unjustly. For if you put me aside you will not easily find another (though it may excite a smile when I say so) who may be able or willing to perform the same service for the public good ; for even as a large and mettlesome, though from the size of its body somewhat slow, horse re-

quires a goad to make it run, even so the god seems to have attached me to you, that by spurring and goading, and exhorting and reproving you day after day with a pious persistency, I should rouse you to the performance of what your dignity requires. Such an honest counsellor, and one who shall as faithfully apply when necessary the profitable pain that belongs to the successful treatment of your malady, you may not so readily find again; for which reason I say, fellow-citizens, hear me and spare my life; but if, as is natural enough, you take offence, and, like other sleepers, begin to kick and to butt at the man who rouses you from your lethargy, nothing is easier than killing me; and then when I am gone you will be allowed to sleep on in uninterrupted sloth, unless indeed the god shall be pleased to send some other messenger of grace to pluck you from destruction. And that I truly am such a person as I here profess to be, a real messenger of the gods to you, you may gather from hence that no mere human motive could have induced me now for so many years to have neglected my own affairs, and devoted myself to your good, looking upon every man as my father or my brother, and exhorting him by every possible suasion to seek for virtue as the only good. And this also I may say, that if in the exercise of this my vocation I had exacted any payment or received any pecuniary reward my accusers might have had some ground for their charge; but as the case stands you perceive plainly that, while my enemies have brought forward every possible charge against me with the most shameless effrontery, to substantiate which they might imagine themselves in possession of some



shadow of proof, none of them has produced a single witness to the effect that I ever either received or sought a wage of any kind for the instructions which I imparted. But there is one witness which I can produce to rebut such a charge if it were made, a witness which will not fail to silence even the bitterness of my accusers,—even that poverty in which I have lived and in which I shall die.

“So much for the character of my teaching. But perhaps it may seem strange to some one, that, while I go about the city giving counsel to every man in this busy fashion, with all my fondness for business I have not found my way into public life, nor come forward on this stage to advise you on public affairs. Now the cause of this is none other than that which you have frequently heard me mention, namely, THAT SOMETHING DIVINE AND SUPERHUMAN to which Meletus in his address scoffingly alluded ; for this is the sober truth, O ye judges, that from my boyhood I have on all important occasions been wont to hear a voice which, whenever it speaks in reference to what I am about to do, always warns me to refrain, but never urges me to perform.<sup>1</sup> This voice it is,

<sup>1</sup> This passage teaches us all that can profitably be said on the so-called *δαίμων* or familiar spirit of Socrates. It was plainly nothing but an inward voice dissuading from certain courses of action, which, as it rested on no grounds of human argumentation, and did not pretend to explain itself, fell to be classed with what we call mysterious instincts and presentiments, and which, as a pious man, Socrates, and in my opinion wisely, attributed to the Source of all original vital power and spiritual energy, viz., GOD. If men eat and drink, and sleep and perform other essential functions of vitality, by a law which the Creator keeps in His own hands, and over which human volition exercises no control, there is no reason why in the higher region of our moral and intellectual life, behind and beyond the domain of our purpose and volition, the great

and nothing else, which forbade me to meddle with public affairs, and forbade me very wisely, as I can now clearly perceive, and with a most excellent result; for of this, O Athenians, be assured, if I had essayed at an early period of my life to manage your public business, I should without doubt have perished long ago, and done no good either to you or to

Source of all cosmic energy should not reserve for Himself a field of deeper influence, and by us necessarily inexplicable. Our understanding, with all its pretensions, is a petty faculty, which asserts its power lightly in dissecting what is dead, but proves itself feeble and powerless in all that concerns vital origination. Homer constantly represents his heroes as receiving inspirations of strength and wisdom from the Infinite Source of all strength and wisdom; and in accordance with this healthy human instinct Socrates taught that on great and critical occasions he was often directed by a mysterious voice, or intimation from the *τὸ δαιμόνιον*. The only thing about the matter which ought to require explanation is the method in which this divine power acted. Its method of action was negative, never positive, and warning on each occasion from what was not to be done, never inciting to what should be done. The reason of this, we think, is not far to seek. Socrates was both personally, and in virtue of the people to whom he belonged, a reasoner; logic was his lamp through life, and by this clear light he was habitually guided in all common cases. But there are dark and doubtful moments in the brightest lives, when even the wisest and the most conscientious can find no sure direction in the pros and cons that suffice for general guidance; in such cases one is thrown back on those radical and fundamental instincts of character which underlie all reasoning and all purpose; and the particular God-given instinct which was strong in the nature of Socrates was *not* to meddle with certain matters, from which it was doubtful whether his character would come out unscathed. It was therefore a mysterious instinct of caution that God had implanted in the breast of the philosopher, an instinct of the utmost value to all men who live in the world, but especially useful to one who, like Socrates, was always in danger of being drawn by his strong and wide sympathies into regions from which, in the interest of his higher mission, it was better that he should retire.

myself. And be not wroth with me if in this I tell you the truth ; the man does not exist who shall be able to save his life anywhere, if he shall set himself honestly and persistently to oppose you or any other multitude of people when you are violently bent on doing things unjust and unlawful ; whosoever therefore would live on this earth as the champion of right and justice, if only for a little while, amongst men, must make up his mind to do good as a private person, and forego all ambition to serve the public in a political capacity."

This is not the tone certainly which any accused person anxious to save his life in pleading before a democratic jury would have adopted, whether at Athens or New York. By the majority of his judges, who came predisposed to condemn him, such language could only be interpreted as adding insult to injury. If he thinks himself too good to live amongst us, why, then, let him die ! And in accordance with this sentiment a verdict was brought in—only by a small majority however—that he was guilty of the charge. This verdict, according to Athenian law, did not necessarily determine the punishment ; the accuser asked for death ; but from the smallness of the majority there was every reason to believe that a less punishment would have satisfied the jury, if only the accused had shown any willingness to accept it. But in the short address which he made after the verdict of guilty had been given in, though he professed himself willing to pay a fine of thirty minæ, which his friends had guaranteed, for himself was too poor, yet he made this declaration with such an air of calm superiority, and accompanied it with such a proud claim of reward

for great public services as his proper civic due, instead of punishment for any public offence, that his judges, being, as they were, made of the common human stuff, under the feelings of the moment could scarcely do otherwise than take it as an insult, and so they passed sentence of death upon the philosopher for contumacy towards themselves, not less than for blasphemy against the gods.

The fate of Socrates was now fixed ; nor did he show any desire to have it altered. To such a strict observer of the laws, and a person to whom his moral position before men was of infinitely more consequence than his life, any attempt to escape from prison could have been suggested only to provoke refusal ; so he remained in ward thirty days, till the sacred ship should return from the Delian festival, during the absence of which Attic usage forbade the infliction of capital punishment on any citizen. Through all this period he is represented as preserving the same tone of cheerful seriousness and playful dignity which characterized him in his defence before the judges. He discoursed with his friends on the immortality of the soul ; and the record of this conversation, no doubt, in the argumentative part largely Platonized, but in the fundamental scheme substantially true, has been preserved to the world in the well-known dialogue of the *Phædo* ; the closing chapters of which, exhibiting with a graceful and graphic simplicity, never surpassed, the last moments of the revered teacher's mortal career, supply all that is further required to complete the present sketch :—" Well, friends, we have been discoursing for this last hour on the immortality of the soul, and there are many points about that matter

on which he were a bold man who should readily dogmatize ; but one thing I seem to know full certainly, that whosoever during his earthly life has flung sensual pleasures behind him, and been studious to adorn his soul, not with conventional and adventitious trappings, but with its own proper decoration, temperance and justice, and courage and freedom and truth,—the person so prepared waits cheerfully to perform the journey to the unseen world at whatever period Fate may choose to call him. You, Simmias, and Cebes, and the rest of you, my dear friends, will go that road some day, when your hour comes : as for me, to use the phrase of the tragic poets, ‘Destiny even now calls me,’ and it is about the hour that I should be going to the bath ; for I think it better to take a bath first before I drink the drug, so that the women may not have the trouble to wash my body when I am gone.

“Here Crito interposed and said, Be it so ! but have you no last commands to give to these your friends or to me, in relation to your children, or any matter by attending to which we might do you a pleasure ? Nothing but what I am always saying, O Crito : if you will seriously attend to your own lives and characters, you will do what is most pleasurable to me and mine, and to yourselves, even though you should not be able to agree with me in all that we have been discoursing ; but if you live at random, and neglect yourselves, and do not strive to follow in the traces of a virtuous life, such as we have marked out now, and in many former conversations, you will do no good either to me or to yourselves. Well then, said Crito, we will apply ourselves with all our hearts to this matter ; but in

what way do you wish that we should bury you? Any way you like, said he, if you can only get hold of me! then with a quiet smile, and looking round upon us, he said: I cannot persuade this good Crito that I who am now talking to him, and marshalling the heads of my argument, am the veritable Socrates; but he persists in thinking Socrates is that body which he will see by and by stretched out on the floor, and he asks how he is to bury me? but as to what I have been asserting with many words, that after I have drunk the hemlock I shall be with you no longer, but shall depart to some blessedness of the blest, this I seem to have spoken all in vain, so far as he is concerned. Only, for a little comfort to you, and to myself, I beseech you, dear friends, give Crito security for me, and pledge yourself to the opposite effect of the pledge he gave in my behalf before the jury. For he stood guarantee that I should remain and wait the result of the trial; but from you I request that you give him security that, after I die, I shall not remain, but forthwith depart, that, in this way, my excellent friend may suffer less grief, and when he sees my body either burnt or inhumated, may not grieve for me, as if I were suffering maltreatment, nor say in reference to my body, that they are either laying out Socrates on a bier, or carrying him forth to the place of the dead, or laying him in the ground. For be assured of this, most excellent Crito, that to use words in an improper sense is not only a bad thing in itself, but it generates a bad habit in the soul. Be of good cheer therefore, and talk about burying my body, not burying me; and as to the manner, manage this business as it shall seem best to you, or as may be most in accordance with law and custom.

“With these words he rose and went into a side chamber for the bath, with Crito following; but the rest of us he requested to remain. Accordingly we remained, conversing with one another on the subject of the recent discourse, and considering sorrowfully our unhappy condition, destined as we were to spend the rest of our days as orphans deprived of a beloved father. Then after he had bathed, and his children were brought to him—for he had two sons, one full-grown,—and the women also came in—he spoke to them for some time in the presence of Crito, and gave his last commands, and having sent them home, came back to us. And now it was near sunset, for he had been a considerable time within; and he came and sat down, and after that did not speak much; and then the officer of the Eleven came in and said to him, O Socrates, I shall not have to blame you as I am in the way of blaming others, because they reproach me for giving them the draught—me, who have nothing to do with the offence, but who only execute what I am commanded to do by the Archons. But you, as during the whole time that you have been here, you showed a nobility and gentleness of disposition which I never knew in another, so now I am convinced that you will accuse not me but those who are the real authors of your death. Now therefore, for you know my message, farewell! and endeavour to bear what must be borne with a light heart. And with this he wept, and turned and went out. And Socrates, looking after him, said, Fare thou, too, well; and we will do even as you say. Then turning to us, What a kind-hearted fellow this is! During the whole period of my abode here he would often come

up to me, like the best of men, and now he weeps for me with such generous tears. But come, let us do his bidding, and let some one bring in the drug, if it is rubbed down ; if not, let the man grate it. But I think, said Crito, that the sun is yet on the mountains, and is not set ; and I have known others in your condition who delayed the drinking of the draught till the latest moment, and, even after the officer had made his intimation, continued eating and drinking and talking with their friends, whom they desired to have beside them. Be not therefore in a hurry ; there is abundance of time. Likely enough, said Socrates ; and they did wisely what they did, thinking that they would gain something thereby ; but it were not seemly in me to follow their example, for I should gain nothing by delaying the draught for a few moments except to laugh at myself for having clung so eagerly to the remnant of a life that had already run its course. But come, do as I bid you, and not otherwise.

“On this Crito gave a nod to the boy who was standing near ; and the boy went out, and after spending some time in grating down the herb, returned, bringing with him the man whose duty it was to administer the drug mingled in a bowl. Well, said Socrates, my good fellow, do you understand this affair, so as to give directions how we are to proceed ? You have nothing to do, said the man, but to drink the draught, and to walk about till you feel a heaviness about your limbs, and then lie down ; after that the drink will work for itself. And with this he gave the bowl to Socrates ; and he, taking it very graciously, and without trembling or changing colour, but in his usual way looking the man broadly



in the face, said to him, What do you say as to this draught, may one make a libation of a part of it, or not? We grate down just what we think is a proper measure to drink, and nothing more. I understand, said he; but at all events it is lawful to pray to the gods, that our migration hence may take place with good omens, even as I pray now; and so be it. And with these words, bringing the bowl to his lips, he quaffed the draught lightly and pleasantly to the dregs. Whereupon we, who had hitherto been able to repress our sorrow, now that we saw him drinking the poison, and not a drop remaining in the bowl, in spite of every effort burst into tears; and I, covering my head with my mantle, began to bewail my fate—my fate, not his, considering of what a man and what a friend I was now deprived. But Crito, even before me, not being able to restrain his tears, rose up; and as for Apollodorus, who had been weeping all along, he now broke out into such a piteous wail as to rend the hearts of all present and crush them with sorrow, except only Socrates himself, who quietly remarked—What is this you are about, my good sirs? Did I not send the women away expressly for this purpose, that there might be no extravagant lamentings at my exit, for I have always heard that in a sacrifice it is a good omen when the victim receives the blow peacefully. Be quiet, therefore, and possess your souls in patience. Whereat we, being ashamed, made an effort to restrain our tears. Then he walked up and down, till, feeling his legs become heavy, he came, according to the direction, and laid himself down on his back; whereupon the man who gave the bowl came up to him and touched him, and at short intervals examined his feet, and

his legs, and then, pressing his foot closely, inquired if he felt anything, to which he replied, No ; then the man gradually brought his hand further and further up, first to his shins and then along the leg, asking always if he had any sensation ; and when he gave no sign we saw that his limbs were cold and stiff. Then he himself likewise touched his body with his hand and said, *When the numbness comes up to my heart then I shall depart.* And after that, when the numbness had reached the lower part of the belly, he suddenly uncovered himself—for when he lay down he had thrown his mantle over his face—and said,—which were the last words he uttered—*O Crito, we owe a cock to Æsculapius ; pay the vow and do not forget ;* and with that drew the mantle again over his face. It shall be done, said Crito ; have you nothing else to say ? But now there was no reply ; and, after a short interval, a convulsive motion shook the body, and the man going up uncovered his face, and we saw that his eyes were fixed. Then Crito going up closed his mouth and his eyes. And this, O Echecrates, was the end of our beloved companion and friend, a man of whom we may truly say, **OF ALL MEN WHOM WE HAVE KNOWN, HE WAS THE BEST, THE WISEST, AND THE MOST JUST."**

## ARISTOTLE.

THERE is a natural sequence in the processes of social culture which is well illustrated by the history of Moral Philosophy among the Greeks. The man of action comes before the man of literature, the man of literature before the man of science. In Greek ethics Socrates was the man of action, Plato the man of literature, and Aristotle the man of science. Not, of course, that Plato was merely the literary man, in the trivial modern sense of that word; he was eminently the philosopher—not merely φιλόλογος but φιλόσοφος—but he put forth his philosophy in a popular form; he addressed himself to the imagination as well as the reason; he appealed, as we would say, to the general public; and speaking to men in a human way, on the most interesting of human topics, through the medium of language artistically handled, he falls manifestly under the broad category of the literary as opposed to the scientific man, who works on a special subject, and with a special faculty. But Aristotle was pre-eminently, and with very marked features, the man of knowledge; he came with the dissecting knife in hand and addressed himself to those who were willing to make special dissections with him for the mere purpose of knowing, and drew a broad line of

demarcation between the speculative and the practical world. Nevertheless the Stagirite was something more than a knowing machine; he was a man, and by virtue of his Hellenic birth also a citizen. He could not therefore avoid occupying to a certain extent the province of the practical man; and so it has come to pass that in three great works, the *Ethics*, the *Politics*, and the *Rhetoric*, he has transported himself from the teacher's chair, and entered into competition with Socrates and Plato as a preacher of social morals and a guide to civic conduct. This was well both for him and for us: well for him, because mere knowing can never exhaust the riches of a nature so essentially practical as that of man: well for us, because otherwise we could scarcely have imagined the phenomenon of an intellect at once so complete in all the categories of scientific cognition, and so strongly marked with all the sagacity that belongs to the so-called practical man, the man of society, the man of business, the accomplished citizen. And it is to this walking out into the realm of common life, instead of confining himself like so many erudite Germans within the limits of a library or a laboratory, that Aristotle owes no small part of the influence which he has so long exercised, not only in the schools but among intelligent men of all classes. In ancient times, when Moral Philosophy was justly regarded as the principal part of that wisdom which it concerns all men to possess, the Philosopher of the Lyceum never would have been able to assert his place as a public teacher alongside of Socrates and Plato had he bestowed only a secondary consideration on the grand arts of living and governing. As it was, the poet-philosopher of the Academy could not but remain

the more popular and the more effective moral teacher of the two ; but if Plato was more attractive and more interesting, and by these qualities commanded a wider audience, it was a great consolation to the lesser circle of the Stagirite's disciples that, though in his discourses on moral matters he was more angular and more severe, he was at the same time more shrewd, more sagacious, and more practical. The reputation which Aristotle thus maintained among ancient Greeks and Romans, both as a speculator and as a wise guide in the conduct of life, was increased rather than diminished when brought into contact with the new moral force of Christianity. No doubt Plato at first was the natural vestibule through which the cultivated Greeks of Alexandria entered the temple of Christian faith ; but after that faith, partly in league with Plato, and partly in spite of Plato, had achieved its natural triumph, Aristotle, the clear, cold, and keen, but by no means devout master of all knowledge, by a sort of reaction, as it should seem, in the middle ages began to assert an exclusive dominance in the schools, both of Christian Europe and, through the Arabians, in the East. To all who were anxious for clear and exact knowledge in matters visible and tangible, the Stagirite was the only guide. As the high priest of science he acted in those days of sacerdotal direction as the natural complement of faith, not as its antagonist ; and for this reason he is praised by Dante among the solemn forms of the mighty dead that pace through the dim halls of the unseen world, as

“ Il gran maestro di color chi sanno.”

The dethronement which he afterwards suffered at

the hands of those twin innovators Luther and Lord Bacon was again a mere matter of reaction, and could in its nature be only temporary. Honest Martin raged in his own way very furiously against the great dictator of the schools, almost as if he had been the Pope:—"Aristotle, that histrionic mountebank, who from behind a Greek mask has so long bewitched the Church of Christ, that most cunning juggler of souls, whom, if he had not been accredited as of human blood and bone, we should have been justified in maintaining to be the veritable devil."<sup>1</sup> But this we plainly see to be the language of a man not with the balance of truth in his hand, but with the sword of sacred wrath in his tongue; and, indeed, the sword was at that time very needful, and wielded with a wise hostility, not against the true Aristotle whom we now read and admire, but against the so-called Aristotelian fence of the schools, used oftener for subtle and shadowy exercitation and in defence of the grossest abuses than in the honest search after truth. Of the real Aristotle Luther knew as little in those days as not a few Christians at the present hour know of true Christianity, coming as it does to them through the strangely distorting media of scholastic subtleties, sacerdotal usurpations, and pure human stupidities of all kinds. As for Lord Bacon, he was no doubt equally right in stoutly protesting against the then Aristotelian logic as a hindrance rather than a help to the true knowledge of nature; while, at the same time, he was no less certainly in the wrong if he imagined, or led men to imagine, either that induction was the only method which leads to the discovery of important truth, or that

<sup>1</sup> Luther's Briefe, anno 1516.—De Wette, i. p. 16.

Aristotle's writings lent any countenance to those baseless and unfruitful methods of speculation which were presented under the authority of his name. It was necessary, however, that the human mind should be thoroughly emancipated from the dictatorial oppression of the false Aristotle before the true Aristotle could be reinstated on his throne; and this required time. Accordingly we find that some of the most original thinkers and ingenious scholars of the last century seem to have imagined that Aristotle and the Pope were two great usurpers, the one in the intellectual, the other in the religious world, whom the great Protestant movement of the sixteenth century, in the interest both of learning and religion, had rightfully dethroned. "Mr. Harris, for example," says his biographer, "had imbibed a prejudice, very common at that time even among scholars, that Aristotle was an obscure and unprofitable author, whose philosophy had deservedly been superseded by that of Mr. Locke."<sup>1</sup> And in perfect harmony with this, Mr. Burton, in his life of Hume, remarks that "the name of Aristotle is not once mentioned in Hume's treatise of human nature."<sup>2</sup> Strange revolution of thought in a country where, in the days of John Knox, it had been customary for famous academical teachers to say—" *Stultum est dicere Aristotelem errasse!*" And, indeed, not only Hume, but Bentham, James Mill, and all the thinkers of that century, manifested a strange lust of spinning knowledge out of their own bowels, so to speak, with a careless or insolent neglect of the great truths handed down for the use of all ages by the master

<sup>1</sup> Life of Harris, by the Earl of Malmesbury.

<sup>2</sup> Hume's Life, i. p. 92.

thinkers of ancient times. But not even in Scotland, never famous for Greek, could such ignorance last for ever. The French Revolution of 1789 shook all men violently out of their old complacencies, and blew their dainty conceits of all kinds to the winds ; things were now to be built up from the foundations, not in the political world only, but in the intellectual and religious world no less ; torpid Churches were suddenly fevered with hot activity ; in literature the forgotten language of a natural and passionate poetry was to be restored ; and in philosophy the ancient foundations of stable knowledge were to be laid bare. Under such a violent volcanic action it could not be but that both Plato and Aristotle should be made to stand out before lesser names in their true dimensions. Aristotle especially revealed himself to many thoughtful Germans, and a few thoughtful Englishmen, as the precursor of Bacon in the use of the great organon of induction ; and the hard and cautious genius of the Scotch, under the guidance of a polyhistoric Hamilton, found in the Stagirite a more dignified corner-stone than in Reid for the erection of a philosophical edifice which rather sought safety in narrowing than glory in extending the bounds of human speculation. In Oxford, the stiff conservatism of the College tutors, men trained to the exact knowledge of a few traditional books, more certainly than any profound philosophical insight, preserved the *Ethics*, along with the *Logic*, of Aristotle as one of the general instruments of juvenile drill ; while, outside the academic precincts, liberal statesmen like Cornwall Lewis and democratic historians like Grote continued to quote the Stagirite as the wisest at once and the most cautious of all



ancient political speculators. Thus the natural balance of judgment was restored; and Aristotle, redeemed at once from the ignorant idolatry of pseudo disciples and the local conceit of men who spurned to learn from any but themselves, took his place for ever as an intellectual dictator of the first rank, with whom if a man did not happen to agree, it was always more likely that the dissentient had wandered into error than that the authority from whom he dissented had failed to fasten his glance upon the truth.

Before attempting to set forth in its great salient points the ethical system of Aristotle, it will be at once interesting and useful to sketch shortly the leading events of his life, omitting altogether, as a matter of course, those hundred and one points of uncertain report and slippery slander which are wont to attach themselves to the fame of any great man as to a natural nucleus. And when a man like Aristotle is not only a great man according to the common measure of human greatness, but an altogether extraordinary man, it is as natural that he should be spoken against from all sides as that dogs should bark at a stranger. The epiphany of an intellectual giant in any assembly of men of average talent makes those appear dwarfs who had previously, not without reason, accounted themselves of reputable stature; and as no man likes to be dwarfed, the necessary result of such an apparition is to set men's wits agog to find out cunning devices, whereby the overwhelming stature of the huge intruder may seem to be curtailed. So Aristotle, we are told, had "a whole host of enemies;" and we shall therefore, as just judges, be justified in throwing out of court, as vitiated in its source, the greater part of the merely anecdotal

accretions that cling to the name of the mighty Stagirite.

The adjuncts of high social position and freedom from pecuniary pressure, always advantageous to wise men, hurtful only to fools, Aristotle enjoyed in a remarkable degree. Born 384 B.C. in a Greek town, but under Macedonian influence, his father, who belonged to an old Asclepiad family, as court physician to King Amyntas, had ample opportunities of launching him into the world with all the training, equipment, and supports that are the natural harbingers of a prosperous career. He was not therefore a Greek in the strict sense of the word; and, though he borrowed his language and culture from Attica, and sympathized mainly with popular institutions, as his great work on Politics shows, he had good reason to congratulate himself that he did not lose his original citizenship when the eloquence of Demosthenes thundered in vain against the gold and the iron of the Macedonian. In the period of Aristotle's youth there was nothing in Greece proper to make any thoughtful person lament that he had been born a subject of a sturdy and semi-barbarous but rising monarchy, rather than a citizen of an exhausted and decaying democracy; for though the victories of Chabrias had restored in some sort the supremacy of the Athenians at sea, the brilliant career of Epaminondas had elevated Thebes for a moment only to make general Greece more divided and less able to resist the growing power of Macedonia. Whether his father had destined him to follow his own profession is uncertain; there are however in the *Ethics*, and elsewhere in his works, frequent allusions to the medical art, such as might have been expected from

the associations of his parentage ; and the prominent place given to physical science in his writings seems to indicate a tendency partly favoured by the circumstances of his birth, partly evoked by the natural progress of the Greek mind in the then stage of its development. This only we know certainly, that at the age of seventeen, about the time when young men in Scotland generally leave school for the university, the future father of encyclopædic science was sent to Athens, where he remained for twenty years as a pupil of Plato in the Academy. But though a pupil, he was anything but a disciple. Naturally of an inductive rather than a speculative habit of mind, and disposed to dissect and to tabulate rather than to collect and to construct, he displayed from year to year a more marked divergence from the great ideal thinker who at that time was impressing his type on the rising intellect of Greece. The reported gossip of antiquity has much to say about some bitter rivalry that arose, and unseemly quarrel that broke out, between the dictatorial master and the independent pupil ; but we need believe nothing of this, except in so far as it may be an indication of a radical difference of intellectual character in the two men, which could not but make itself felt in various ways, more or less inconsistent with the relation of a merely receptive and responsive discipleship. Nothing is more common in the intercourse of cultivated men, than that one of the parties finds himself in a condition to respect profoundly what he cannot at all agree with, and what he feels bound, ever and anon, decidedly to controvert. So it fared no doubt with young Aristotle in relation to old Plato. Confluence between two souls so differently constituted there

could be none. They cannot be compared as one rose may be compared with another, or even as one flower may be contrasted with another flower, but only as things of a totally different nature may be named in the same sentence to make their incommensurability more patent. The intellect of Aristotle was a granite palace, that of Plato a garden of paradise ; Aristotle's wit was like a sharp knife and a weighty hammer, Plato's like a rolling river and a shining ocean ; the one bristled with all curious knowledge, the other blossomed with all lofty speculation ; Aristotle analysed all things great and small ; Plato harmonized all things beautiful and grand. Along with this inborn diversity of intellectual character, we have reason to suppose that there were certain habits of life and social peculiarities about the Stagirite, which were not without offence to the more strict and devoted Platonists. For that there was a certain tinge of Puritanism, and even a sort of lofty pedantry, occasionally manifested in the great architect of ideas, can, I think, scarcely be doubted by any one who has read his great work—the *Republic*—with an unbribed judgment. Now if Plato was somewhat of a philosophical Puritan, in Aristotle there was presented that combination of a philosopher and a man of the world, of the man of principle with the man of practice, which, because it is difficult to produce, is always rare, and because it is rare is always admired. A physician, and above all a court physician, must be a man who enjoys and who understands society : such was Aristotle's father ; and the son, while betaking himself to the quiet bowers of the Athenian Academy for the cultivation of thought, could not forget that there was a large busy world without

which imperiously asserted itself, and from which not even a philosopher could be allowed to withdraw with impunity. It was a characteristic tenet of the Peripatetic school that the external trappings and decorations of life are not to be looked down on with a lofty contempt, but rather cared for as serviceable, and in some cases necessary, aids to a perfect life; and so those Quaker-like affectations of plain garb, and those over-virtuous abstinences from "cakes and ale" and other delights of the merely sensuous part of our nature, which some Platonic and Stoic philosophers affected, could not but meet from Aristotle with a practical protest, of which some significant hint peeps out here and there among the scraps of ancient anecdote-mongers and memoir-writers. Plato, we are told, "was not pleased with Aristotle's manner of life, nor with his dress. For indeed he was somewhat nice and curious in his apparel, and there was a particular tidiness about his shoes; and his hair also he had cut after a jaunty fashion, not approved of by men of Plato's following; and he made a display of many rings on his finger. Moreover, there was a peculiar sarcastic play about his mouth, and, when he spoke, he could prattle away with a notable fluency; all which things seemed not to be quite in keeping with the character of a philosopher, and were the occasion that Plato preferred Speusippus and Xenocrates, who afterwards became his successors in the Academy." This picture is, no doubt, in the main true; and it can only excite our admiration when we consider that the same man of whom this is told was also noted as the most severe and persistent reader in Athens; his house, indeed, was called by Plato "the house of the reader;" and the

learned geographer Strabo notes him as the first Greek who collected books on a large scale, and supplied to the Ptolemies of the succeeding age the model of those systematic stores of books with which they made Alexandria famous. Aristotle therefore may justly be regarded as the great prototype of those modern Germans who, like the mailed knights of the middle ages, stand up in our libraries, cased in the invulnerable panoply of polyhistoric and encyclopædic erudition ; and he gave birth to that curious sort of intellectual laboriousness, which when divorced from his genius and his sagacity, produced those accumulations of written and printed record, under which the shelves of so many libraries groan, by which also, we may justly say, not a few strong intellects have been lost to the living world, smothered beneath heaps of cumbrous babblement, in extent infinite, in value infinitesimal.

After the death of Plato in the year 347, Aristotle retired for a few years to the court of his fellow-student and friend Hermias, then ruler of Atarnæ, on the coast of Asia Minor. This change of scene was necessary for him, while on the one hand his scheme of establishing a new school of philosophy was yet immature, and, on the other hand, the political relations between Macedonia and Athens were not such as that it would be pleasant for him to be identified with a city which might soon be forced into hostility with his natural sovereign. It was fruitful also, no doubt, in those shrewd observations on men and manners which stamp so many sagacious pages in his moral and political treatises. From this judicious retirement after a few years he was called to a field of more

honourable and influential activity. In the year 342 he received a letter from Philip of Macedon, requesting him to undertake the office of tutor to his young son Alexander. The duties of this position he performed with such results to his royal pupil as in such circumstances were to be expected; and with the great advantage to himself of adding the resources of an absolute monarch and a great conqueror to his own private instruments for the prosecution of scientific research. The unexpected death of Philip by the hands of an assassin, called Alexander prematurely to dash into that brilliant career of Asiatic victory which has made his name no less famous than that of his tutor, who by this event relieved at once from personal responsibility and political apprehension, found himself in a position to establish that independent school of wisdom at Athens, which now for more than two thousand years has propagated itself in the world as the natural and necessary complement to the Platonic style of thought. In the year 334 he pitched his intellectual camp at the Lyceum, in the eastern suburbs of Athens, under Mount Lycabettus, and here during the space of thirteen years he remained exercising towards his scholars the diverse functions of fatherhood and fraternity, which in the ancient philosophical associations, as in the early Christian Churches, were so happily combined. After the death of Alexander, in the year 322, he left Athens and retired to Chalcis, in Eubœa, where he had a small property; a migration to which political considerations must have been the main inducement, for so distinguished a dependant of the Macedonian court could scarcely look upon himself as safe in

the Attic capital the moment that the death of the great conqueror opened up to the most distinguished people whom his arms had subjugated the prospect of political liberation. The philosopher, accordingly, when leaving the city of his adoption, as it turned out for the last time, with an obvious allusion to the fate of Socrates, is reported to have said that he did so in order that the Athenians might not again have the opportunity of signaling themselves by the murder of a philosopher ; for, indeed, in unlimited democracy generally, and specially in the extreme democracy of that time, he had no faith, observing sarcastically that while the Athenians had discovered two useful things, wheat and freedom, they understood how to use the one, but the other they had possessed for a short time, only to abuse. And no doubt he acted wisely in retreating from a scene where no weight of character or reputation for grave wisdom could have shielded him from the combined assault of personal malignity and political rancour so ready in every democratic soil to rise with jealous spite against individual eminence and independence. The philosopher was threatened, we are told, with prosecution for atheism ; a charge which, however unfounded to the eye of reason, might have been brought against the Stagirite from the orthodox Athenian point of view with much more justice than about eighty years before it had been brought against the great father of moral science. An atheist certainly, in the strict sense of the term, Aristotle was not, but a pious believer in the polytheistic theology of his country he was even less ; piety indeed of any kind is not at all a pronounced feature in the composition of his character. Like many a



modern man of science, he had cultivated acuteness at the expense of wonder; and, while indulging in the omnivorous lust of knowledge, had starved veneration, and stunted the growth of some of the most delicate emotions of the soul. For devotion is of the very finest fragrance of the emotional life; and as there are some flowers without smell, so there are some souls without piety. In point of religious feeling, beyond all question, both Socrates and Plato were infinitely superior to Aristotle.

Such are the few trustworthy notices that have been preserved to us of the outward fortunes of this great hierarch of encyclopædic knowledge. He died shortly after his retirement to Chalcis, at the early age of sixty-three, followed immediately by his great contemporary Demosthenes. On his deathbed he named Theophrastus as his successor in the chair of the great school of philosophy which he had founded.

We now proceed to place before the reader a short statement of the most striking characteristics of the ethical philosophy of Aristotle as they are set forth in that compact little book, the *Nicomachean Ethics*. And the first observation proper to make here is the extreme practicality that appears not more in the general colour and tone than in the individual chapters and paragraphs of this remarkable volume. In criticising the sermons delivered in our Christian pulpits we are accustomed to distinguish between doctrinal and practical preaching, and to believe that while, in Scotland at least, the former is the more popular and the more easy, the latter is always the more difficult and the more efficient style of moral address. Now what we have to say of Aristotle, as he appears in the *Ethics*, is that he is not a mere

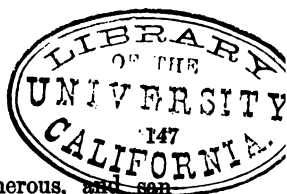
writer on ethics, an acute speculator or a subtle casuist, but he presents himself with all the seriousness of a preacher, and an eminently practical preacher. No doubt in this capacity he must be regarded both by natural genius and in the general tone of his ethical writings as second to his great master Plato ; but his influence on the moral culture of the world has not for that reason been less. A large class of men, especially in this practical country, are apt to suspect Plato of nonsense ; and these are unwilling to take advice in the affairs of common life from a man who, in his flights of ideal constructiveness, so far transcends the narrow range of their own hard-faced realism. But Aristotle is a man whom no man can suspect of nonsense. He takes what lies before him, and in the most cool practical way conceivable proceeds to analyse it, and to spell out its significance. He is not ambitious—at least not in the department of morals—of piling a grand system, or of tabulating an exhaustive scheme. He is a practical man, as much as you or I am, and sees with marked distinctness always what lies in his way. There is no fear that under his guidance you will lose yourself in a mist or be carried off your feet in a balloon. He is therefore peculiarly fitted for being put forward as a lay-preacher to a British public ; and the Oxford scholars have done good service to the English youth by giving his famous work on Ethics such a prominent place among classical books of the first rank. He is as sensible as Dr. Paley, and a great deal more profound ; while, on the other hand, it never occurs to him that it is necessary to prepare the way for a plain practical discourse on the conduct of life by abstract discussions

on the liberty of the will and the responsibility of free agents. This omission Principal Grant considers a weakness ; I consider it a sign of good sense, or, at all events, a remarkable piece of good luck. He assumes morality in the moral world, just as he assumes light and air and water in the physical ; he describes a moral man with strong lines and a firm hand, just as he would describe a healthy man as contrasted with a diseased man. If you have a single eye and an honest purpose, you will not fail to know what he means ; if you have not, his book is not for you. There never was a more practical preacher. This word *practical*, therefore, I desire the reader to emphasize doubly when he applies himself to the thorough comprehension of the *Nicomachean Ethics*. There are, no doubt, in this treatise, as in almost every Greek book, some half-dozen curious questions raised, which, like the subtle casuistry of the Jesuit doctors, have little practical value ; for Aristotle was a Greek, and as such a habitual dealer in ἀπορήματα, or knotty points, in the solution of which a hard practical Scot or a broad burly Englishman would think a single sentence wasted. These however belong to the soil, grow up like weeds among the best wheat, and, like bad puns in Shakespeare, must be taken with the lot. In the gross and scope of his handling, as we have said, the Stagirite systematically waives all unpractical questions ; and in the very arrangement of his book an attentive reader will not fail to discern that there are certain scientific deficiencies which can be explained fully only from the consideration that the writer had vividly realized the difference between what we could call an academical lecture and a sermon, and was

determined to make it felt that a lecture on morals, through which the undertones of seriousness that belong to a sermon are not heard, is one of the most absurd and unmeaning of all human performances. No doubt this defect in respect of strictly scientific method may arise partly from the fact that the treatise seems to have been composed at different times, and packed up, so to speak, in bundles rather than reared up architecturally into a jointed structure; it is also plain enough to any one who can read with a discerning eye that the work was left incomplete by the great author, and that the fifth, sixth, and seventh books, as we now have them, are from a different hand, and of manifestly inferior workmanship; but I consider it not less certain that, had it not been for the dominance of the practical point of view, not a few chapters in this most valuable treatise would have been compacted more aptly into the firmness of a complete organism. Once and again in the first two books of his treatise does he repeat the solemn warning that our object in inquiring into the nature of virtue is, not that we may know what virtue is, but that we may be virtuous. Once and again does he enter a protest against the supersubtle tendencies of his countrymen, always ready to stand and debate, even where the solution of the problem was to be found only in motion and in action. Subtleties of any kind, indeed, are not suitable for a moral discourse; the entertainment of them shows that the inquirer has not yet conceived what the purport of the inquiry is; ethical philosophy refers as distinctly to a deed as a sword refers to a cut; and all questions about morals are idle, and even pernicious, that do not bear directly on some practical result.

We must therefore, so Aristotle argues, in our method of discussion here, not insist on having always those exact proofs and nice definitions which in the sciences of measurement and number may fairly be demanded. We should rather seek for an analogy to moral science in such arts as medicine, and say that propriety of conduct, like the health of the body, is liable to much indeterminateness and variation; that to seek for scientific rules which might apply with exactitude to all cases is absurd; that no wise man will attempt to cut logs with razors, and that in such matters of complex practice we must content ourselves with stating some such broad general principles as suit the great majority of cases, and which every man must be left to apply for himself in the experience of life. Of the deep tone of practical seriousness which underlies the whole of the *Nicomachean Ethics*, I know no more striking proof than an utterance of Maurice, in the preface to his exposition of the Epistles of John, which I shall here extract. "I owe unspeakable gratitude," says that truly evangelical moralist, "to the University of Oxford for having put Aristotle's *Ethics* into my hands, and induced me to read it, and to think of it. I doubt if I could have received a greater boon from any university or any teacher. I will tell you what this book did for me. First, it assured me that the principles of morals cannot belong to one time or another; that they must belong to all times. Here was an old heathen Greek making me aware of things that were passing within me, detecting my laziness and my insincerity, showing how little I was doing the things which I professed to do, forcing me to confess that with all the

advantages which I enjoyed he was better than I was. That was one great thing. Next, I could not but learn from him—for he took immense pains to tell me—that it is not by reading a book or learning a set of maxims by heart that one gets to know anything of morality, that it belongs to life, and must be learned in the daily practice of life. English and Christian writers no doubt might have told me the same thing. But I am not sure that their words would have gone as much home as Aristotle's did. I might have thought that it was their business, part of their profession, to utter those stern maxims, and to hold up such lofty ideals of conduct." And what adds immense force to Aristotle's preaching, especially with young men, is the feeling that they have here to do not only with a non-professional preacher but with a thorough gentleman, and a shrewd man of the world, the friend of princes, and of great statesmen and mighty captains. It is seldom indeed that young men in the heat of their blood and the glow of their fancy will listen with much attention to sermons of any kind, even from the best preachers; but if they will not receive the word of warning from such a prophet as Aristotle they will at least have no excuse for sneering either at the doctor or the doctrine. In him they will find no sarcastic Cynic, content with the negative pleasure of snarling from his private kennel at the faults of men, instead of rising to help their infirmities; no sickly devotee whose principal occupation through the dreariness of the present life is to dream and maunder about the glories of the future; no curious registrar of morbid frames of mind or dainty nurse of unproductive sentiment. Such caricatures of the spiritual man,



justly odious to the vigorous, generous, and ~~and~~ guineous temper of youth, may be found cropping out largely in the histories both of philosophical and religious sectaries; but not a hint of them appears in the thoroughly masculine, thoroughly manly, and thoroughly healthy Ethics of Aristotle.

The corner-stone of Aristotle's moral doctrine, as in that of Socrates, lies in the single word *λόγος*, which, whether in its internal side as Reason, or with its outer face as Discourse, was so peculiarly the watchword of the Hellenic race. "The Greeks seek after wisdom;" and wisdom, or *σοφία*, is in all cases the result, and the only possible result, of the just exercise of *λόγος* or reason. We shall not therefore expect to find in the Stagirite any fundamental principle different from that on which the moral doctrine of Socrates rests—nay, just as some of the most characteristic maxims of the New Testament can be pointed out in, and no doubt were actually borrowed from, the Old Testament, even so, and in a much greater degree, was the ethical doctrine of Aristotle borrowed in its great leading points from Socrates and Plato. This borrowing, however, was not in the style of patchwork; it was an affair of natural growth. What we find in Aristotle is not a new ethical doctrine, but the emphasizing and systematizing of certain important aspects of an old doctrine. Now the aspect which Aristotle strongly emphasizes as the starting-point of his ethical teaching is the *τέλος* and the *ἀγαθόν*. All men profess to have some object after which they strive in their life and by their deeds; no man in this world, as Goethe says, can safely live at random: the ship that sails at random will be wrecked

even in a calm, and the man who lives at random will be ruined without the help of any positive vice. What then is it that men must propose to themselves as the τέλος, the end, object, or purpose of their existence? Generally, all men profess to be seeking for the ἀγαθόν, or the Good. The question, therefore, which ethical science has to answer is, in the words of the Westminster Catechism, *What is the chief end of man?* What is the ultimate aim and highest Good, the *summum bonum*, of which the creature called Man is capable? How are we to discover this? Plainly in the same way that we discover the chief good of any special kind of man,—a man exercising any special professional function. What is the *summum bonum* of a flute-player? Of course to play the flute, and to play the flute well; of a soldier, to fight well; of a shoemaker, to make good shoes; of a brewer, to brew good beer; of a fowler, to snare birds; and of an angler, to hook fish. The chief end, therefore, of any creature is found by discovering his natural work or business in the world,—for all things are full of labour, and a man's duty is always some kind of work. As, then, there is a special work for the flute-player or the fowler, which determines his chief good, so, if we are to find the chief end of man, we must put our finger on some general work or business, which belongs to all men as men, and not as engaged in special occupations and practising particular arts. How is this work found? Of course by fixing our attention on the differentiating element in the human creature. The differentiating element in birds is wings, in fish fins, in worms rings. By this differentiation, stamped on every creature by the absolute dictatorship of



Nature, the destiny and the duty, the privilege and the glory, of each type of organized existence is inevitably determined. The creature has nothing to do in the matter but to recognise and to obey; unreasoning creatures unconsciously and blindly, reasoning creatures consciously and with deliberate choice. The proper work of man, therefore, can lie only in what in him is most distinctively human; not therefore of course in any function of the merely vegetative life which he has in common with the plant; nor again in any function of the merely sensuous life, which he enjoys in common with oxen; but in the exercise of that faculty which he alone possesses, and which alone stamps him as distinctively human, viz., REASON. The work of a man, accordingly, and the chief end of all men, will be an energizing of the soul, according to reason, or not without reason; and a life according to reason will be good, and the chief good; and not only so, but it must also be the pleasure, and the highest pleasure, of the reasonable being who leads such a life; for the pleasure of every creature lies in acting freely and without hindrance according to its distinctive nature; and as horses are the pleasure of the rider, and views of the landscape painter, so good actions are the pleasure of good men, and reasonable actions the delight of all who live by the use of reason; so much so indeed, that he cannot even claim to be numbered amongst good men who, besides doing good deeds, does not likewise rejoice in doing such deeds. Charity given with an unwilling hand is not charity; it is a boon extorted.

This statement taken almost literally from the first eight chapters of the first book of the *Ethics*, will, it is hoped, make the moral attitude of Aris-

totle sufficiently intelligible. He does not say, with Bentham and the modern utilitarians, "Look round about you for what is pleasurable; and that which affords pleasure to you, and to the greatest possible number of creatures with whom you are socially connected, is your duty;" but he looks about to find your distinctive excellence, your peculiar faculty among all creatures,—“Exercise that,” he says, “and you fulfil your destiny, and attain your chief good. As for pleasure, that you will have also, not as an amulet hung about your neck, but in the very necessity of your energy exercised according to your special nature. Cultivate what is noblest in you, and you cannot fail to find what is most agreeable. The doing of this, however, is by no means so simple a matter as in the mere abstract statement might appear. It is the business of a man, no doubt, to act reasonably, that is virtuously, just as much as it is the business of a bee to bag honey; but it is a much easier thing for the bee to suck honey from the flowers than for a man to force fragrant deeds from the stuff that daily life presents. How is this? The difficulty lies in the compound nature of man: a nature not compound only, but composed of parts of which one is found to be often strangely at variance with the others; so much so, indeed, that while reason is the distinctive faculty of man, and to act reasonably is at once his safety, his happiness, and his glory, he bears within himself likewise a principle of unreason, an *ἄλογον* opposed to his *λόγος*,—a principle in the normal state of man altogether dependent and servile, but which, as things are, has a strong tendency to rebel, assert an unruly independence, and even cast down from his throne

the lawful regent of the soul. This, the reader will remark, is exactly the doctrine of St. Paul, with regard to the contrariety of Flesh and Spirit, in the eighth chapter of the Romans, and expressed in almost the same terms. The exact words of Aristotle are: "*There appear manifestly in human beings some strong natural tendencies different from reason, and not only different, but fighting with and resisting reason.*" But this remarkable peculiarity in the complex creature Man does not in the least change the nature of human good; it only adds to it another element which makes it in the end more glorious—the element of resistance, struggle, victory, and triumph,—of course always with the necessary alternative of possible feebleness, cowardice, and defeat. And the same fact,—the same original sin, as our theologians term it,—nicely considered, raises a noticeable question about the origin of laws and moral obligation; that old question so often discussed by the Sophists, and argued, as we have seen, by Socrates, in his discourse with Hippias, whether right and wrong exist by nature or by institution, φύσει, as they expressed it, or νόμῳ; and the answer given to this question by the Stagirite, characterized by his usual good sense, is that, while the determination of right and wrong is not a matter of arbitrary, compulsory imposition, according to the selfish theory of Hobbes, but lies deeply rooted in the innermost recesses of human nature, it is nevertheless true that it is the nature of man, more perhaps than of any other animal, to require training and discipline to bring out what is in him; and that virtue, in fact, is not virtue till the inborn impulses towards excellence have been fostered and strengthened by those social

appliances which lie in the very primary conditions of human life. We are made virtuous, therefore, neither by nature, nor contrary to nature, nor independently of nature, but we *grow* virtuous by repeated acts of living according to reason, as we learn to see by using our eyes. Virtue is, in fact, a habit;<sup>1</sup> and as one fit of drunkenness does not make a man a drunkard, so one act of generosity does not make a generous man, and the whole roll of the virtues practised only once or twice, however completely, does not make a virtuous man. Hence the immense importance of education, which other animals may dispense with, but not man, and on which, accordingly, both Plato and Aristotle insist, as the one thing needful for the well-being, whether of the individual or of society. The existence of innate tendencies towards the Good does not in the least imply that human nature in its early stages may be safely left to itself. These good tendencies may be counteracted by opposite tendencies; they may be overwhelmed by adverse circumstance; they may be extinguished; and experience proves that they not seldom are extinguished.

Having laid this sure foundation in the differentiating element of man, the philosopher might naturally have proceeded to prove that, assuming man to be naturally a social animal, and endowed with those instincts which make social organization necessary to his normal existence, any application of reason to social existence, that is, every assertion of practical reason in a creature so constituted, is what we call

<sup>1</sup> ἔξως, ἡθός, ἔθος, with which again St. Paul agrees, Heb. v. 14, where Aristotle's favourite word is used.

right, and every omission to assert it, or direct assertion of the contrary, is what we call wrong. A right action is an action according to the real constitution of things, which reality it is the business of reason to discern ; a wrong act is an act in contravention of the real constitution of things, and can be performed only when reason is undeveloped or asleep, or by some violent impulse or blind illusion led astray : it is an act insulated, contumacious, and rebellious, issuing necessarily in confusion and chaos and ruin ; for no single unit in a complex whole can assert its mere capricious independent self in practical denial of the totality to which it belongs, without producing discomfort at first, and ultimately being crushed by the firm compactness of the mighty machinery which it has recklessly dared to disturb. How this might have been demonstrated in detail the reader of the preceding discourse on Socrates cannot be ignorant ; but however much it lay in his way, the Stagirite in his Nicomachean treatise did not choose to enter upon this theme. For this procedure he may have had two sufficient reasons ; for, in the first place, he may have thought that view of the matter lay too obviously in the whole scheme and handling both of Plato and Socrates, to be susceptible of much novelty at his hands ; and in the second place, he may have considered such a demonstration, however cogent in a book, to be less practically useful than some test of right and wrong, which he might be able to formulate. And in the test which he hits upon, as we shall presently see, it is quite evident that practical utility rather than theoretic invulnerability was his main object ; and this is precisely what, in consistency at once with the nature of the

subject, and his own introductory observations, he was directly led to do. His test was simply this, that virtue, or right conduct, is generally found in the mean between two extremes; for though there may be the same difficulty in pronouncing about the quality of particular actions, sometimes, as there is in pronouncing about the state of bodily health in any individual, yet, upon a broad view of both cases, nothing seems more obvious and more certain than that the unhealthy condition, whether of body or soul, is chiefly indicated by some deficiency or excess. In other words, virtue is a medium, a balance, a proportion, a symmetry, a harmony, a nice adjustment of the force of each part in reference to the calculated action of the whole. Now, it will at once be seen that this principle is not put forth as anything new; its truth rather consists in its antiquity, and in the deep-rooted experience of all human individuals and all human associations. It is a principle which forms part of the proverbial wisdom of all peoples; and the Greeks especially from the oldest times were strong on this point. *Μηδὲν ἄγαν—μέτρον ἄριστον—παντὶ μέσω τὸ κράτος θεὸς ὤπασεν*—were maxims familiar to every Greek ear long before Aristotle; and in the realm of speculation, the *ἀριθμός*, or *number* of Pythagoras, when applied to morals, really meant nothing else. So in the Proverbs of Solomon we find the well-known utterances—“*Hast thou found honey? eat so much as is sufficient for thee, lest thou be filled therewith and vomit it.*” And again: “*Be not righteous overmuch, neither make thyself overwise; why shouldst thou destroy thyself? Be not overmuch wicked, neither be thou foolish: why shouldst thou die before thy*

time?" And our Shakespeare, whose plays are a grand equestrian march of all wisdom, says to the same effect in his own admirable style—

"These violent delights have violent ends,  
And in their triumph die : like fire and powder  
Which, as they kiss, consume. The sweetest honey  
Is loathsome in his own deliciousness,  
And in the taste confounds the appetite :  
Therefore love moderately ; long love doth so ;  
Too swift arrives as tardy as too slow."

What Aristotle enunciated therefore was merely the most commonplace wisdom ; and so much the better. Commonplace wisdom is the best kind of wisdom for common needs and every-day occasions. It is too late in the day now, and was too late in Aristotle's time certainly, to be discovering altogether new rules for keeping the consciences and the stomachs of the human millions in good order. Things absolutely necessary to healthy existence were necessarily known from the earliest ages, unless indeed we imagine that the primeval man was created in a state of physical and moral disease, that he might grope and blunder his way into health, as some theorists assert that he groped and blundered his way from a tiger into a moral being, and from a monkey into a man. So far unquestionably, Henry Thomas Buckle was right : there are no discoveries to be made in morals.\* We do not discover the sun ; we only recognise it when the clouds are blown and the rain has exhausted itself. So it is in morals—in the light which lighteth every man that cometh into the world. We do not discover moral principles by a fingering induction, or in any other way ; we merely remove obstructions ; we can apply the

\* This profound remark had been made long before by Burke. See the "Reflections," edited by Payne, p. 101. The preacher said it before Burke. cf. Eccles. "There is nothing new under the sun."

bellows also and blow the small spark into a mighty flame. Our endeavours therefore as preachers, and as philosophers, like Aristotle, are not in vain. We have much to do, if not in the way of discovering absolutely new principles, certainly in a thousand and one ways of applying those principles. A burning-glass when first invented did not discover the sun ; it utilized the sun. And in the same way the institution of every new church or the establishment of every new school is an invention in morals, though not a discovery of a new moral principle. Sabbath-schools were a discovery in morals ; Voluntary Churches were a discovery in morals ; Reform Bills were a discovery in morals. And in the world of books, we must say also that the principle of the mean asserted and systematically set forth in the Nicomachean Ethics was a great discovery in moral philosophy. The discovery consisted in the sagacity which seized, among a thousand others, a floating proverb, as alone fit, or mainly fit, for being made the corner-stone of a comprehensive canon of human conduct. To pick up a rough stone from the road, and polish it, and set it in a ring, and carve upon it the signature of the king's imperial will, is no small achievement ; and this simile precisely appraises the merit of the Stagirite, in reference to that old maxim *μηδὲν ἄγαν*, which we have just quoted. He has stamped it with the authority of his own regal intellect, in a manner appealing not less effectively to the analytic habits of the scientific man, than to the broad views so dear to the so-called practical man. And that he was grandly right in seizing upon this rule of conduct, no person who has ever seriously applied himself to the wisdom of life, as to the one



thing needful, will have any difficulty in admitting. For there is hardly a man of any self-knowledge who will not be willing to confess that the greatest blunders he has made in the difficult game of life have arisen from the neglect of this rule, as his most signal successes have sprung from the observance of it. The attainment of this golden mean, indeed, in one shape or another, is the constant problem of existence; and it will be difficult to point out any defects of moral character which do not arise either from a certain feebleness and deficiency of some necessary practical energy, or from the exaggeration, and misapplication of virtues—a misapplication, be it observed, which almost always proceeds from an excess; for as a mother is apt to have her pet child, and an old maid her green parrot, her Skye terrier, or her tortoise-shell cat, on which she spends the overflow of her non-utilized sympathies, so every man is apt to have his pet virtue, his idol excellence, on which he prides himself, and of which he is fond of making a parade on all proper and improper occasions. It is the excessive sway of the favourite affection that makes a man blind to discern and weak to prevent its improper application. This is a great truth—and somewhat of a comfortable truth, too; for to sin by excess of good is always better than to offend from pure viciousness; and man is upon the whole (notwithstanding the floating lies of the hour, and the Devil's Paradise in New York) a blundering rather than a diabolical creature. The importance of Aristotle's rule arises from the fact that it is a regulative principle of universal application; and in this way it may well be taken in the left hand, along with the golden rule in the right

hand, "Do unto others as ye would that they would do unto you ;" for this sacred sentence is founded on a just, delicate, and broad sympathy, and belongs rather to the emotional element—the moral steam, so to speak—of our nature, which, to avoid great perils, must always be associated with the regulative principle of the mean, or something to that effect. These two famous maxims indeed may, for practical purposes, be regarded as complementary of each other. For persons in whom the sympathetic emotions predominate are often deficient in the regulative faculty ; while those whose power of regulation is great have sometimes little to regulate, and like a great commander with few soldiers, make a very poor appearance in the battle-field. In the struggle of life, the man whose sympathetic unselfish impulses are strong will perhaps find more benefit from the constant reference to Aristotle's mean than even to the Scriptural golden rule ; while the well-tempered Aristotelian will, on the other hand, find it for his advantage to inquire whether the even pace at which he goes is not as much owing to the dullness of the charger's blood as to the skill with which the rider wields the rein. For there is no single maxim in morals that will conduct a man through all practical difficulties without the consideration of some other maxim qualifying it, and perhaps, for the nonce, giving it a flat contradiction ; as I have known a gentleman who confessed to me that by nothing had he been led into so many serious blunders as by the indiscriminate application of this very text, "Do unto others," etc. ; for, being a man of a peculiar idiosyncrasy, and not having learned that the golden rule applies only to that which we

hold in common with our fellow-men, and not to those points on which we differ, he was constantly led into a course of behaviour towards certain persons, meant by him as a great kindness, but taken as a serious offence. While he wished not to be troublesome, he was considered to be neglectful; while he abstained from mentioning certain subjects for fear of rousing painful feelings he was accused of coldness and indifference; while he meant to be frank and confiding, he was met with a rebuff that he was rude and impertinent. All this shows how little mere preaching and parading of general maxims has to do with the difficult task of the formation of character; and no writer deserves greater praise for having gravely enunciated this truth than the author of the *Nicomachean Ethics*. In order fully to realize the value of the Aristotelian mean in the conduct of life, we may follow the method of the great moralist himself, and cull a few examples at random for its verification. We shall take three virtues—courage, truthfulness, self-esteem—and see how distinctly they stand out each as the middle-point of two vicious extremes. That courage is the mean between cowardice and rashness does not require to be told: but what a wide field of operation does this triad open to us, while we proceed to realize it in education, and in the conduct of public affairs, and in the events of life! What a nice judgment is required to know at what exact point the too much and the too little commences, where the right way swerves into an error of which the consequences may be incalculable! For the mean point is variable; and the hesitation which would be prudence in one person, or on one occasion, is cowardice in another. A sailor sailing without a

chart among blind reefs and strong currents—such as occur everywhere in the Shetland seas—can scarcely be too cautious; with a soldier, a bold dash into a difficulty with a fearlessness which can scarcely be distinguished from rashness is sometimes the nearest road to a brilliant success. And as good amusements are a mimicry of life, there is a moment at bowls, or croquet, or backgammon, or even deliberate whist, when the fortune of a whole game may depend on a move which at other times would be either the most stupid ignorance or the most reckless folly. The wisdom of life, considered as a battle, depends at every moment on the skill to know when to advance and when to retreat, when to dash on with the spear, and when to crouch behind the shield; to know this moment is to know the just mean between rashness and cowardice, which the Greeks by a very significant name called manhood (*ἀνδρείότης*) or courage. Take another virtue. Of all commodities in the world, the most difficult to deal with is truth. If, indeed, all men went about the streets, like Socrates, in search of nothing but truth, and thanking everybody most fervidly for any contribution to his stock of it, even in the most disagreeable shape, truthfulness would be an easy virtue; as easy for a human being, one might imagine, as for a quick fountain to spout water, and for an eager fire to spit flame. But we all know it is not so—rather quite otherwise, for truth is an article to which, except in so far as particular truths may happen to prop up their prejudices, to flatter their vanity, and to inflate their conceit, many persons have serious objections. To fling it in their face is to insult them; to put it down their throats,

even with a silver spoon and sugar-candy, a difficult operation. Hence, in the conduct of life, the great importance of not speaking too much truth, lest we frighten people, and not speaking too little, lest we learn altogether to live upon lies. In mixed society, on account of the extreme sensitiveness of all sorts of vain and self-important persons, the rule is generally adopted of speaking as little truth as possible—that is, as little serious truth about important matters; for truth about trifles will discompose no one. But this conventional reticence is by no means the *μεσότης* which a reasonable compliance with the Aristotelian rule in this case would require; for though a surplus of truth is sure to make society uncomfortable, and a deluge of it makes it impossible, a great deficiency will certainly make it tame and stupid; and this is the extreme to which, in this country, we have lately been drifting with a gentle, but not the less a dangerous, current. Even in our pulpits we find a sort of cowardice sometimes formally enthroned, and a tame coldness set up as the standard in a place where, above all others, an indiscreet fervour might occasionally be allowed to pass for full cousin to the greatest excellence. Take again, self-esteem, which is partly an instinct, partly with wise men the result of that self-knowledge which long and varied experience ought always to produce. This is a moral mean perhaps even more difficult to strike than truthfulness; for in speaking, or rather not speaking, the truth, the principal difficulty a wise man has to deal with is the weakness of a brother; whereas, in estimating himself, the wisest man is constantly liable to be bribed by that love of self which, indeed, is the necessary root of

our vitality, but never can be the blooming crown of our glory. In reference to this quality, the general tendency of the world is towards over-estimate ; most persons are apt to measure too highly the value of their own particular strong point, and to under-estimate, or altogether misprize, that of their neighbours ; as a gentleman in the month of August scouring the moors in triumph with a gun will be apt to think himself a much more sublime character than a poet lying lazily on a heather brae, and spinning out pretty fancies to the tune of a brown burn that eddies lazily round an old granite boulder ; while the rhymers, on the other hand, thinks it a daintier occupation to sympathize quietly with feathered life than to take it away with powder and shot. So it is with us all, women as well as men—

“ If a fair girl has but a pretty face,  
She has the wit to know it.”

And there is no reason why she should not know it. If a woman does not know her points, according to a high authority, she cannot even dress well ; only, experience has proved that the less men and women think about their strong points, except, of course, when they are dressing, the better ; for there is no more certain way of committing suicide on the higher moral nature than by falling in love with ourselves. In reference to this matter, therefore, it may be thought that the other and less common extreme is the more safe—it is better to think too lowly of ourselves than too highly. And it is a fact, capable of being proved from a hundred biographies, that the greatest men have been the least given to self-glorification ; that modesty, as is commonly said,

is the invariable accompaniment of genuine power, while forward conceit, and empty inflation, and boastful exhibition of all kinds, are the natural characteristics of the young, the superficial, and the small. The under-estimate of self often found in connexion with the highest genius, especially in the early period of its experiments, arises naturally from the high ideal of perfection, by the contemplation of which excellence grows. No young man who puts a few well-adjusted and well-toned figures together on a piece of canvas can know, and certainly ought never to imagine, that he carries Raphael and Michael Angelo, and something better than both perhaps, in his bosom. But though this be true, I do not know whether I have not seen more sad mistakes made in life by persons who were rather depressed by too little than elevated by too much self-esteem. I have sometimes thought that the conceit so natural to young men is given to them by a gracious provision as a superfluity that is sure to be pruned off. The world is constantly employed in pulling down outrageous conceit; but when a poor fellow starts in the hot race of life, afflicted with that disease which the Greeks call *δυσωπία*, or *difficult-facedness*—that is, so modest as not to be able to look a fellow-being in the face—I must confess, though I have a kindly feeling towards a person so deficient which I never can have to the smart and pert self-conscious mannikin, I feel that the defect of the one is a much greater misfortune, and a malady much more difficult to cure, than the excess of the other. With some persons, and indeed whole families, the tendency to underrate their own capacity acts like a positive taint in the blood; it cuts the wing from hope, dulls the nerve

of aspiration, and palsies the arm of action. It makes an honest man useless where God has put him, and opens the door for a dishonest man with a little natural confidence to do badly what the honest man for sheer lack of confidence has not been able to do at all. The man of defective self-esteem thus commits two great wrongs—he wrongs himself, because he allows himself to be shunted out of his natural sphere, and becomes a hindrance where he might have been a help; and he wrongs the public, which lacks both the insight and the leisure to drag modest merit from its den and to look with an unwinking eye on the juggling glamour of the bold pretender.

But it is not only in the phases of individual character and the experiences of personal life that the validity of the Aristotelian standard of well-being is strongly asserted. In every sphere of existence through the various drama of the cosmos, we find the same principle in operation. And we may, without qualification, broadly pronounce that the world is a *κόσμος*, an ordered and garnished whole, only in so far as it is held together by the harmonizing law of the mean; otherwise it jerks asunder, and through violent excess bolts into chaos. Take what we call Health, for instance; what is it but the rhythmical medium of normal pulse between the excess of fever and the defect of feebleness? which two extremes, as the common saying is, necessarily meet; for they are both equally removed from healthy life, and sisters-uterine to death and dissolution. Then, again, what is Beauty? A power which all feel, but few can define; neither shall I attempt to define it now. But one thing at least in reference to it is quite plain, that it is always a medium



betwixt two extremes, or, what comes to the same thing, a marriage of extremes. For by such a marriage, as we see in the commonest processes of chemical action, a mean product is produced of a comparatively mild and innocuous character. The corrosive acid or alkali is annihilated and a neutral salt comes to view. Exactly so in works of nature or art on which the imagination can pleasantly dwell. No extreme is beautiful. The extreme of force overwhelms; the extreme of gentleness enfeebles and enervates. Therefore, to make a handsome man, we must borrow a few tricks of grace from the female; and to make a woman who shall be more than an animated rose or primrose, we must find her infected with a certain dose of firmness and energy from the male. A mere masculine creature, composed altogether of the extreme of strength and force, is disagreeable, and often unbearable; a mere feminine creature in the extreme of delicacy, however finely tinted with the "*dolce mistura di rosa e di ligustro*," which Ariosto lauds, if she is capable only of a gentle smile and a soft caress, very soon becomes tiresome. She is the extreme of the mere woman, and, like a cooing turtle-dove, soon satiates; and at the apparition of such an unfeathered pigeon we yawn, as from the fully-developed unmitigated male bear we shrink. But it is in the great movements of the social world—in the rise and fall of stock and commercial speculations—no less than in the slow changes and violent revolutions of Churches and States, that the operation of the Aristotelian mean is most strikingly exemplified. Moderation, indeed, both in Church and State, and on 'Change, is the one great condition of safety—no proposition

in Euclid is more certain than this : but though this be the wisdom of government and of trade, it is a wisdom which political, commercial, and ecclesiastical adventurers in all ages have been slow to learn ; and in public life we constantly meet with persons who act and speak as if they believed that the triumph of an extreme view is ever the triumph of right, and that the well-being of communities consists in the unlimited sway of one party and the complete annihilation of all others. And it may be said also, that, notwithstanding all the warnings of centuries of bloody experience, the man or the party that takes the strong one-sided violent view has, on critical occasions, the best chance to succeed. Wisdom in the days of Solomon lifted up her voice in the streets, and was not heard. It is even so now. The streets are not the place for wisdom. Wisdom requires calm reflection ; but the streets are full of hurry and bustle. Aristotle had a serene contempt for the multitude, and the multitude have an instinctive aversion to Aristotle. When you bring a multitude of men together to be harangued, violent and extreme opinions pronounced in the strongest language are apt to be the most popular. A one-sided view taxes thought less ; a one-sided speech flatters an ignorant audience, who are capable only of one idea—at least only of one at a time—and who delight to hug themselves in the fancy that there is no other idea in the universe. And the natural leader of a multitude so affected is not, of course, your man of many thoughts, your Aristotle, your Shakespeare, your Goethe, but your well-packed, self-contained, little man, full of bottled fire impatient to burst forth, who marches from his cradle to his grave capable only

of one aspect of things, and who, if the notion by which he is governed happens to jump with the humour of the time, shall become the demagogue of the hour, or, if circumstances favour, the dictator of the age. When, indeed, we consider the undeniable fact that great social changes are generally effected through the agency of excited multitudes and highly stimulated parties, we shall not be surprised at the result so often exhibited in history. That result shows bloody civil wars instead of peaceful arrangement; faction instead of patriotism; and an oscillation between feverish extremes, instead of a well-calculated balance of social forces. The revolutions and reforms which fill the most interesting pages of history teem with examples of this kind. These revolutions and reforms are of two kinds—remedial and constructive, or disintegrating and destructive; and the history of both equally illustrates the hopelessness—perhaps it were more correct to say the impossibility—of expecting wisdom and moderation to perform a prominent part in the management of the congregated millions of diverse and hostile-minded men under the passionate influences that accompany organic change. For these things are generally done in the manner of a battle: parties get heated; the blood is up; first ink is shed in oceans, then gall, then blood; and who expects moderation from men with partisan pens or poignards in their hands, and carrying on a systematic trade in all sorts of misrepresentation, slander, and lies? We read sometimes, indeed, of a whole people having by a happy accident found out their wisest man—as in the notable example of SOLON—and oligarchs and democrats voluntarily submitting themselves to

him as a just and legal arbiter. The result in this case, as we read, was what might have been expected. The wise man produced a wise constitution. The contending claims of the adverse parties were adjusted with moderation ; and a mingled polity, presenting a just medium between oligarchy, the cold selfishness of the few, and democracy, the overbearing insolence of the many, was the result. But nothing human is permanent ; and the next changes did not proceed so comfortably. The democracy, inflated with their military successes at Marathon and Salamis, would tolerate no check ; their Areopagus, or House of Lords, was shorn of all influence ; the extravagant ambition of their popular assemblies was fooled to the top of its bent by the unprincipled brilliancy of adventurers like Alcibiades ; the constant necessity of maintaining political influence by flinging sopps to a greedy multitude produced, as we see in America at the present hour, a corruption of public morals, and a deterioration of the character of public men, against which all patriotic remonstrances were weak : faction assumed the helm ; venality became law ; and at the moment of danger, when the young Macedonian snake might yet have been crushed, there was found only one honest man among the noisy haranguers of the Pnyx. And to him they listened only when it was too late. Thus, by the excess of democratic polity fostered by Pericles, the insolence of democratic ambition spurred by Alcibiades, the languor that followed the over-exertion of the Peloponnesian War, and the corruption that belongs to every extreme form of government, Athens forfeited her short lease of brilliant liberty, and became a slave for more than two thousand years. A similar scene

was exhibited in the Roman Forum, which, however, I must refrain from painting out in detail here. Suffice it to say that, so long as a moderate balance between patricians and plebeians was maintained, the Aristocratic Republic of Rome prospered at home and conquered abroad; but no sooner had the democracy, by the Hortensian law of B.C. 286, asserted the right of acting alone in legislative measures, without the co-operation of the Roman House of Lords (that is, the Senate), than the seed of destruction was sown. The two parties were now planted face to face on independent ground; two masters in the same house claimed equal power; the peaceful balance became a battle-field; assassinations in the Forum were the harbingers of butcheries in protracted dramas of civil slaughter; violence was followed by exhaustion; and on the bloody steps of a democratic Tribunate the armed nursling of the democracy mounted the throne of universal despotism. So the public life of Ancient Rome ended with faction and a native military monarchy, as that of Greece in faction and subjection to a foreign power. There are some people of a happy innocence of mind who believe that we in modern times, by the help of Christianity and schoolmasters, may haply escape all these evils and flourish in a green immortality on the earth, if not under present circumstances exactly, at least by and by with the help of manhood suffrage, ballot-boxes, unbearded politicians, and a few other democratic imaginations. I am sorry to say that I do not in the least share in these anticipations: only under one condition is it possible that modern States should escape the disintegrating process which annihilated the constitutions of Ancient Greece and

Rome—they must study moderation ; they must be converted to the doctrine of Aristotle ; otherwise they must perish. That in free constitutions public affairs should be managed by the oscillations of opposing parties is necessary and natural : the annihilation of parties is possible only with the prostration of liberty ; but the eternal truth still remains, that if parties will not acknowledge certain wise limitations, but push their hostility to extremes, the preservation of national liberty is impossible. If, when organic reforms are necessary, the wise and moderate men of all parties will unite together to make such changes as will satisfy the just demands of new claimants, without destroying the equally just rights of the old, then, so far as political forces of corruption are concerned, the durability of a constitution may be looked upon as secured ; but if the parties, instead of working for a patriotic purpose, are more concerned for the momentary success of a parliamentary manœuvre than for the ultimate triumph of a great principle—if, instead of wisely and courageously confronting a violent and unreasonable clamour and quashing outrageous folly with statesmanlike firmness, they waver, and flinch, and yield, and even condescend to the base game (practised in ancient Rome and mediæval Florence) of outbidding one another in cowardly concessions to an untempered multitude—in this case, neither Christianity nor schoolmasters can save any modern State from perdition, either on this or on the other side of the Atlantic. For there is not one law of morality for the individual and another for public men, but they are both the same ; and it is not so much the form of government as the tone of political morality,

and the character of politicians, that saves or ruins a State. If in any country the management of public affairs falls into the hands of men who make a trade of politics, and employ an organized machinery of violence, and lies, and intrigue, for the purpose of getting into power; and if they consider power valuable, not for the purpose of moderating popular passions and exposing popular delusions, but for keeping their party in place by spreading full sails to the popular breeze, then that country is already in the hands of the destroying Siva, and no constitution can save it. Political wisdom is not to be expected from men who enter the game of public life with the recklessness of professional gamblers; and that army will scarcely be looked to for noble achievements in the field which, with Selfishness for its god, has chosen Cunning for its captain, and planted Cowardice for a guard.

In these last remarks we have wandered beyond the strict bounds of the present essay into the domain of Politics, and the Art of Government, but not without design; for the *Politics* and the *Ethics* are with the Stagirite only two parts of the same work; as indeed with the Greeks generally, personal ethics were always conceived of in connexion with the State, in the same way that with thorough and consistent Christians the fruits of social virtue cannot be divorced from the root of theological faith of which they are the consummation. And whoever studies the great treatise on the Art of Government with that care, which more than any other work of antiquity its weighty conclusions demand, will not fail to observe that the key-note to the whole political system lies in that *μεσότης*, or just mean,

which is the prominent principle of the *Ethics*. But this by the way. What remains for us now, in order that the modern thinker may have a full view of the attitude of Aristotle as a moral philosopher, is that we exhibit him discoursing in his own person on some one of those types of social character, which in his third and fourth books he has so skilfully analysed. For this purpose we shall choose the section on *μεγαλοψυχία* or *great-mindedness*, a chapter eminently characteristic both of the writer and of the people to whom he belonged, and presenting also one of the most striking of those contrasts between the attitude of Hellenic and that of Christian ethics, which it is one object of the present volume to set forth. The Chapter is the third of Book IV.

“That great-mindedness has reference to something great is plain from the name; let us inquire therefore, in the first place, to what great things it refers; and here it is of no consequence whether we talk formally of the moral habitude itself, or of the person who possesses that habitude. Now, a great-minded person is one who esteems himself worthy of great things, being in fact so worthy; for the man who claims for himself what he does not deserve is a fool; but in virtue there can be nothing foolish or unintelligent. This therefore is the great-minded man. For though a person’s estimate of himself should be just, for example, if, being worthy of little consideration, he esteems himself accordingly, such an one we call sober-minded, but not great-minded; for without a certain magnitude there is no greatness of soul, just as beauty demands a certain stature, and little people may indeed be pretty and well-proportioned, but they



are never called beautiful.<sup>1</sup> On the other hand, the man who esteems himself worthy of great things, being not so worthy, we call pretentious and conceited; though not every one who over-estimates in some degree his real worth is justly charged with conceit. And in the opposite extreme to this, the man who claims less than he deserves is small or mean-minded, whether his real desert be something great or something moderate; and he remains small-minded also, if, while he is worthy of little, he rates himself at less. But the greatest offender in this case is he who, being worthy of great things, nevertheless considers himself worthy of little or of nothing; for how deep might such a man's self-esteem have fallen if he had been really as devoid of moral desert as even with so much real merit he rates himself? Now the great-minded man, in respect of comparative magnitude, seems to stand at an extreme, but in respect of self-estimate he is the just mean; for his estimate of himself falls neither within nor beyond the mark of truth, while the others fail on the one side by excess, and on the other by defect. Further, the man who deems himself worthy of great things, being so worthy, of course deems himself worthy of the greatest things, and of one thing, whatever that be, pre-eminently great. What then do we mean when we say that a man is worthy, that he may justly claim great things or small things? We use

<sup>1</sup> It is interesting here to observe how Aristotle, concurring with Homer (*Od.* xiii. 289), makes the distinction, unquestionably just, through the neglect of which Burke fell into his notable error that beautiful things are always small. He ought to have known that there is the same distinction between *beautiful* and *pretty* in English, as between *καλός* and *δορεῖος* in Greek.

this language always in reference to something external. And the greatest of external things is that which we pay to the gods, and that which men in the highest situations chiefly desire, and for which among men there arises the most noble struggle of the most noble. This, of course, is honour ; for honour is the greatest of external goods. It is in reference therefore to demonstrations of honour and dishonour that the great-minded man comports himself as a wise man ought. And indeed this is a point which requires only to be stated, not argued ; for it is manifest that great-minded men everywhere are spoken of as being great-minded in reference to honour ; for it is honour above all things of which truly great men think themselves worthy, and that in the measure of their desert. But the small-minded man is deficient both in relation to himself and in relation to the dignity that belongs to the great-minded, while the conceited man no doubt sins by excess in reference to his own merit, but not in reference to the high estimate of himself justly entertained by the great-minded man.

“Again, it is obvious that the great-minded man, if he is worthy of the greatest consideration, must be not only a good man, but one of the very best ; for always the better a man is the greater is his desert, and the best man alone may claim the most. The really great-minded man, therefore, must be good ; or rather, let us say that to be entitled to the praise of great-mindedness a man must be great in all virtue. Least of all, certainly, is it consistent with the character of a great-minded man to droop his crest at the face of danger and run away, or to do any act of injustice ; for why should a man do anything dis-

honourable, to whom even the greatest things in the world are small measured by the estimate that he entertains of his own worth? And, indeed, it is quite ridiculous to imagine a man of genuine great-mindedness who is not at the same time a virtuous man. For, if he is bad he is certainly not worthy of honour, honour which is the reward of virtue, and is given only to the good. Let us say therefore that great-mindedness is a sort of crown and blossom of the virtues, for it elevates all the virtues, and without them it cannot exist. For which reason it is a hard thing to be truly great-minded; for this elevation of the soul is not possible without general goodness. We see therefore that it is with demonstrations of honour and dishonour that the great-minded man is principally concerned; and it is characteristic of him, that when great honour is done him by good persons, he is pleased, but always moderately, because on every occasion he only gets what he deserves, or perhaps less; because, in fact, virtue never can receive a proper equivalent for itself in the shape of anything external: he will not, however, reject any such offering, however inferior to his merits, because he will consider that people have given the best they had to give. But the honour that he receives for small services, and from persons of no excellence, he will hold very cheap; for it is not of such respect that he considers himself worthy. Exactly similar is his relation to dishonour; for disrespect in no kind can under any circumstances have reference to him. But honour, though the principal, is not the only external thing that belongs to the great-minded man; money, and power, and prosperity, and their opposites, affect him also in their proper place and degree, in such a

fashion always as that he shall neither be much elevated by their presence, nor much depressed by their absence. For not even the absence of that honour, which he justly claims, will he allow to affect his peace very deeply, much less the withholding of that wealth and that influence, which are desired by the good only for the sake of the honour which they bring with them. He therefore who can look calmly on the absence of that which is most desired, will not break his heart because he finds himself destitute of those things which are valued only as they contribute to the attainment of that desire. For this reason it is that men of a high self-esteem are apt to appear proud and contemptuous. It would appear also that the accidents of birth and fortune contribute in some degree towards great-mindedness; for persons of noble birth are considered worthy of honour, and persons of great influence, and wealthy persons; and there is a superiority belonging to all such persons, which brings a certain amount of honour along with it that is grateful to a good man. And it cannot be denied that such things have a tendency to engender a certain loftiness of soul, for they are never without honour from some quarter. Nevertheless the only thing really deserving of honour is virtue, though where virtue is conjoined with these external advantages it will always command a larger share of public respect. But those who possess such external advantages without virtue have neither any reason for thinking themselves deserving of great consideration, nor are they properly called great-minded; for it is only of those who possess virtue that such things can be predicated. On the contrary, those who possess such external goods are apt to

become insolent and haughty. For without virtue it is by no means easy to bear prosperity well; and, not bearing it well, such persons are apt to conceit themselves better than their neighbours, and to despise them, while themselves spend their lives at random, and do what chance throws in their way. For they imitate the manner of the great-minded man, not being like him in soul; and, while they do nothing on which a lofty estimate of themselves might justly be founded, they find it easy to usurp an apparent superiority by looking down upon their fellow-men. This superiority belongs of right to the great-minded man, for his opinion of himself is founded on reality; but these, as chance may have thrown some exceptional tag of distinction in their way, despise their neighbours. Again, the great-minded man is not fond of running petty risks, nor indeed is it by rash and hasty ventures in any shape that he would catch a small breath of honour; but when a great risk presents itself then he willingly confronts danger, and spares not his life, as deeming life secondary when higher interests are concerned. Moreover, in reference to benefits, he is more given to confer than to receive them; for he who confers a benefit always stands in a position of superiority, while he on whom it is conferred feels inferior. And when a benefit is conferred on him, he will repay it in larger measure; for thus the benefactor will seem to be put under a new obligation, having received more than he gave. He seems also to have a more wakeful memory for those on whom he has conferred benefits, than for those from whom he has received them; for the person benefited is, always inferior to the person conferring the benefit,

and the great-minded man always wishes to feel superior. And he does not hear of benefits conferred on him with the same pleasure as benefits which he has conferred on others, for which reason in Homer Thetis does not commemorate her services to Jove ; and in the same way the Spartans do not speak to the Athenians of the benefits they have conferred on Athens, but of those which they have received. It is also a mark of the great-minded man that he will either not ask a favour at all, or do it with difficulty ; on the other hand, he is ready to do a service to all, but with this difference, that while he bears himself loftily to those high in position and worldly fortune, he is of easy access and condescending to the common man ; for not to bow before the mighty is not easy, and is possible only to those who are inspired by a high sense of personal worth, whereas with common men any man may plant himself on an equality ; and indeed even a little excess of pride in the presence of the proud is never ignoble, while to be haughty to those beneath us is always the sign of a vulgar mind, and a person of low ambition, as when one makes a vaunt of strength before the weak. Again, the great-minded man will not be the first to seize on honourable distinctions when offered, but he will gladly let others precede, being slow and backward, except, indeed, where a difficult thing is to be done, and a very rare honour achieved ; generally he will meddle with few things, but what he does put his hand to must be something great and nameworthy. We may further note that he will be open and above ground, whether in his hatreds or his friendships, for to conceal a man's feelings is usually a sign of fear. And in every case he will

be found more concerned for truth than for opinion, and he will shrink as little from an act as from a word that the occasion may demand ; for his contempt of small men and small things makes him indifferent as to results, and inspires him with a lofty confidence. For which reason also he is much given to speak the truth, except indeed when he wishes to speak ironically ; and it is his delight to use a little humorous self-concealment or self-misrepresentation when he speaks in mixed company. Neither is he able easily to adapt himself to another person, unless, indeed, that person be a special friend, for in this ready adaptability there is generally implied something slavish, as we see that flatterers have always something menial in their character, and low persons more readily condescend to flatter. Nor again is the great-minded man much given to wonder ; for to him there is nothing great. As little is he apt to store up a grudge ; for a great-minded man will not remember trifles, especially petty offences, but will rather overlook them. Nor will he indulge in personal remarks of any kind, speaking little either about himself or others ; for neither is he careful to be praised, nor pleased that others should be blamed ; as little is he given to laud other people, or, on the other hand, to speak evil of others, even when they are his enemies, except perhaps occasionally, when insolence requires to be chastised. Further, about necessary evils, or vexatious trifles, he is not the man to make many bewailings and beseechings, for to behave in this manner a man must take these things much to heart, which he never can. And oftentimes he will be found preferring what is noble and brings no profit, to what is useful and gainful,

for his self-dependence stands out the more thereby. Finally, as to his appearance and manner, it will be noted that the great-minded man is slow in his movements, that his voice is deep, and his discourse weighty, for it is not natural that one who is not anxious about small matters should be in a hurry, or that a person should be very much excited on common occasions, to whom common matters are unimportant. Such then is the great-minded man. The two extremes between which he represents the mean, are, as we have said, the man of low self-estimate and the man of large pretensions and conceit. Now these two are manifestly not bad men, for they are not evil-doers; they only miss the ideal of what is true and noble in character. For the man who thinks meanly of himself, depriving himself of what he might justly claim as his due, though not a vicious man, suffers under a great vice of character, the defect of not knowing himself; for had he known himself, he would certainly have desired to possess the good things to which he has a natural right. At the same time such a person is not to be called foolish; he is only backward. But such a misprision of one's self, however removed from flagrant viciousness, has unquestionably a tendency to deteriorate the character; for the imagination of their own unworthiness, by which these persons are possessed, not only cheats them of valuable external good which might naturally have fallen to their lot, but it causes them also to retire from many noble and excellent spheres of usefulness, and to shrink from the performance of most excellent actions. A conceited man, on the other hand, is both foolish and self-ignorant, and exhibits himself in a more



ridiculous fashion to the general eye ; for deeming himself fit for some honourable office, the moment he appears in public his inefficiency is exposed, and he parades himself in showy dress, and puts himself into attitudes, and wishes that the whole world should take notice of his good fortune, and claims honour as rightfully due to him for such display. There is, however, a greater opposition between the man who thinks meanly of himself and the great-minded man, than between this man and the conceited person ; for in truth the mean abnegation of self, the cheapening of a man's capabilities, and despair of all lofty achievement, is of more common occurrence amongst the masses, and on account of its negative character leads in the practical warfare of life to more sad results."<sup>1</sup>

For commenting on some of the remarkable characteristics of this chapter, hovering as they do so delicately on the slippery border that separates a justifiable pride from a salutary humility, more apt occasion may present itself in our next discourse ; in the meantime it will serve more the purpose of the present inquiry to ask, whether there may not be grave objections to a system of ethics based on the mere prudential calculation of a mean ? and whether, granting this calculation to be wise and salutary, so far as it goes, it may not require to be strengthened by some stronger force than any which the philosophy of the Stagirite supplies ? Now, in the first place, here there is one very common class

<sup>1</sup> The scholar will observe that throughout this passage, and specially in this last sentence, I have paraphrased the author a little, to bring out more clearly his meaning. His style is too curt and bald, not to suffer in some cases by strict literalness.

of objections to the doctrine of the μέσον, to which we hope the whole tone of our previous remarks has already supplied the answer. "*Is it possible,*" some one has often asked, "*to possess too much love? Of what good emotion is envy the exaggeration? Can any modification of spite be virtuous? Can any mere deficiency of the quality of truth account for the viciousness of a positive lie?*" To some of these objections Aristotle has himself supplied the answer; but the best general answer to all is their impertinence as bearing upon a treatise which does not pretend to set forth a curious definition, proof against every subtle objection, but only to supply a useful practical rule. Whosoever accepts the *Nicomachean Ethics* in the practical spirit in which it was written, will soon find, perhaps by no very pleasant experience, that there is nothing more common among good people than to have too much even of such a rare virtue as Christian love; for there is too much always when there is too much for the occasion, or too much for the use or the abuse that is likely to be made of it; and unchastened generosity, inconsiderate philanthropy, and indiscriminate kindness are certainly not among the rarest of social faults. Equally certain is it that some of our most odious vices are only the despotic usurpations of certain instincts, natural and healthy in themselves, and when acting under the habitual check of other instincts equally natural, so as to preserve the just balance of a harmonious whole. Thus envy is merely the natural fruit of a salutary rivalry, when a generous sympathy is wanting; it is an odious state of mind arising out of an excess of rivalry on the one hand, and a deficiency of sympathy on the other. Let this style

of objections therefore pass. But a more serious deficiency in the Aristotelian doctrine seems to reveal itself, when it is said, This morality is merely prudential and calculating; it regulates but it does not move: it supplies the pilot at the helm, and gives him a curiously marked compass to steer by, but it leaves the ship in a stagnant ocean without wind and without tides. Now there is something in this objection, but not nearly so much as appears on the surface. Aristotle certainly is not an emotional writer; he does not stir the affections; he will never be a favourite with women, or with poets, or with evangelists, or with any person—and, this is by no means the worst sort of person—whose head requires to be reached through his heart. It is not true, however, that he commits the folly of attempting to construct a steam-engine without steam. He finds the steam there, and the engine too ready-made, and his only object is to supply a regulator, because a regulator is the chief thing wanted. Whatever an unprincipled or paradoxical Sophist here and there might assert, neither Aristotle nor any notable philosopher of antiquity ever thought it necessary to commence his moral theory with a systematic controversion of the Hobbesian doctrine that man is naturally all selfish, a creature that if left without policemen and executioners would necessarily grow up into a mere intellectual tigerhood. Aristotle assumed, and expressly asserts, that man is naturally a social animal; the social instincts which form families and friendships, clanships and nationalities, being among the most marked peculiarities of his complex nature: these instincts, he knew well, constantly exist in sufficient and more

than sufficient strength; they bubble out like streams from the mountain side, which require only a calculated control to make them useful; they are the luxuriant overgrowth of a rich soil, which demands, not the stimulus of a strong manure, but the check of a wise pruning-hook. That this was Aristotle's view is quite plain; for he not only believes in nature generally, as opposed to the institutions and conventions (*νόμος*) so much in favour with the Sophists, but he devotes two whole books to what he calls *Φιλία*, a word commonly translated "friendship," but which in the *Nicomachean Ethics* is used in the widest sense to designate all the social sympathies and feelings implanted in man by Nature, with the relations springing therefrom; and this part of his work, as Grant well observes, is treated with a depth and moral earnestness that makes the reader feel the supreme importance attached to it by its illustrious author.<sup>1</sup> Aristotle therefore is not to be blamed for ignoring the great motive powers of moral life; he only does not directly address them; it was not his vocation; he was no poet, no apostle; and even without poets and apostles, Nature, he might well imagine, was always strong enough for that part of the business. But even without the fervid wheels of passion there lies in the Aristotelian philosophy, at least for a certain class of noble minds, a driving power of the most approved efficiency. That driving power is simply the love of perfection. "*Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect.*" To live in the most excellent way, accord-

<sup>1</sup> Grant's *Ethics of Aristotle*, vol. i. p. 147.

ing to the true excellence of man, is the constant ideal of an Aristotelian philosopher. And so long as the lofty consciousness of this ideal bears him up, he requires neither whip nor spur to incite him to continue in a virtuous career. He acts in the true spirit of the poet when he says—

“I would do all that best beseems a man ;  
Who would do less is none.”

Or, as Burns has it in the well-known lines,—

“The fear o’ hell’s the hangman’s whip  
To haud the wretch in order ;  
But whaur you feel your honour grip,  
Let that aye be your border.”

This is not a bad driving power by any means in the world, as things go. True, it may not make a man a missionary, but it will keep him out of the mire, and teach him sooner to die than to do a base action. Certainly it will not confine him to the performance of virtues of mere prudential calculation.

So far well. But there is another view which, if we honestly take, we shall find it impossible to acquit the Aristotelian morals of a very serious defect. This defect is the want of the religious element. In saying this I do not mean to assert that God—or rather the gods—are not mentioned from beginning to end of his famous book ; they are alluded to in several places, but merely in the form of a passing remark, as a pedestrian with a long day’s journey before him may pick up a primrose from a moist bank, or a fragrant orchis from a dry brae, and fling it away. Now, there is nothing more nobly characteristic of Christianity than this, that piety is iden-

tical with morality ; that faith and works—not ritual, or ceremonial, or externally imposed works at all, of course, but genuine works of moral fervour and moral firmness—are one ; stand to one another, at least, as the root does to the flower, or the fruit of a wholesome plant, of which not the root but the fruit is the valuable part. That this is the only true and philosophical relation of the two great moral potencies no thinker will deny. Or, to take another simile, which will suit equally well : Every arch must have its keystone ; and the keystone of every solid doctrine of ethics, as of every close compacted system of speculative philosophy, is God. That there is a great defect here in the Aristotelian ethics is plain. A man might as well write a treatise on the Affections without mention of reverence, as set forth a system of morals without mention of God. As the discipline of a well-ordered family implies the recognition of the father as the great source from which the family flows—as the prime power by which it is regulated—so a treatise on human ethics implies a chapter on human piety, or rather a pervading soul of human piety, without which all other chapters want their highest inspiration. And in this view the Aristotelian author of the "*Magna Moralia*" is wrong in blaming Plato for mingling up the doctrine of Virtue with discussions on the Absolute Good—that is, God. It is important to inquire what was the cause of this defect. That the subject was not altogether ignored by our philosopher is plain from the single sentence of allusion in Book viii. 12. 5 ; and, indeed, that a man of such reach of intellect should by mere accident or carelessness have omitted such an important factor in all moral calculations

seems in the highest degree improbable ; but so far is the idea of God from giving any colour to his system of Moral Philosophy, that the very occurrence of the phrase, *θεραπεύειν τὸν θεόν*, in the last section of the Eudemian Ethics, has been justly adduced by Grant among the many proofs of the inauthenticity of that treatise. That Aristotle was a theist is certain, both from other places of his voluminous writings, and specially from a famous passage in the *Metaphysics* which has lately been brought forward with due prominence by the noble-minded Bunsen in his great work, *God in History* ; it seems impossible, indeed, for such a profound thinker as Aristotle to be an atheist, because, as Schleiermacher well remarks, "Philosophy cannot inquire into the totality of things, without at the same time inquiring into their unity, and as the totality of things is the world, so the unity of things is God ;" or, as Spinoza has it in one of his propositions—" *Quicquid est in Deo est, et nihil sine Deo neque esse neque concipi potest.*" But it is one thing to be a theist as a matter of speculative belief, and another thing to be a man of devout temper and pious practice. And herein, if I mistake not, lies the real cause of the defect in the Ethics now under consideration. For if Aristotle had been a man of any fervour of religious sentiment, he had two courses before him with regard to the Greek religion, neither of which he has followed—he might either, like his great master Plato, or Xenophanes of Colophon among the pre-Socratic thinkers, have attacked the Homeric theology, and shown how its general tendency and some of its most distinctive features were inconsistent with a pure and elevated morality, or, like Socrates,

Xenophon, Pindar, Æschylus, Plutarch, and many other far-sighted and large-hearted men, he might have taken Jove as the impersonated Providence of Hellenic piety, and, allowing the immoral deities quietly to drop, shown how all the highest qualities of the moral nature of man are collected and concentrated in the supreme sovereign of gods and men. In the one case, he would have shown his zeal for true religion by his zealous iconoclasm of false gods; in the other case, he might have shown a still nobler form of piety by his kindly exhibition of the soul of good in things evil. But he did neither of these things; and the conclusion plainly is that the omission arose from a defect in his mental constitution, which curtailed the reverential faculties of their fair proportions. From all which we learn a most important lesson: that the analytic work of the mere understanding, even when practised by a Titan like Aristotle, is an inadequate method of reaching the highest form of vital reality, or, to use the words of Grant, it forces even the greatest minds at times to degenerate into a sort of smallness; and, generally, that mere intellectual culture never can of itself produce a complete and healthy manhood—never can elaborate for a human soul that rich blood which then only appears when the watery element of the understanding is thoroughly permeated by the red particles of the moral and emotional nature. So true is it, to use St. Paul's language, that "*knowledge puffeth up, but charity edifieth*;" and of charity there is no perfect form except that reverential recognition of the common fatherhood of God, and the common brotherhood of man, which we call religion. Let this want of the devout element, therefore, stand



strongly pronounced as a defect in the ethical system of Aristotle ; he is less than Socrates and Plato as a moralist, principally because he is less in this. Omitting from his calculation one element of that Nature which is stronger than all philosophies and wider than all churches, he has so far failed ; and the failure of such a man in such a field should teach our modern philosophers, physical, mechanical, and utilitarian, to beware of following his example.

## CHRISTIANITY.

AN ancient Greek poet, of grave thoughts and weighty words, describing the character and functions of one of the great primeval divinities of his country, says that she is

*πολλῶν ὀνομάτων μορφή μία,*

One shape of many names,

an expression which might have been varied with equal truth, as

One Power of many shapes,

and indicating that the motley polymorphous harlequinade, as it appears to us, of a polytheistic Pantheism, is at bottom reducible to a few fundamental forms; and if this be true of such a shifting kaleidoscopic exhibition as popular mythology, it holds good much more of popular morals. All moral philosophies are fundamentally the same, and cannot indeed be otherwise, being only the variously emphasized expression of the one self-existent and self-organizing Reason—the *Βασιλικὸς Νοῦς* of Plato—which makes either a physical or a moral world possible. We shall not expect therefore to find absolutely new principles in the laws which regulate human conduct any more than in the laws of those primary vitalizing forces—Light and Heat—which

shape and regulate all organism, immutably and infallibly, by the inherent necessity of the great Being of sleepless underived energy of whom they are the manifestation. We shall, on the contrary, believe with an assured faith, that the principles of morals, and the primary forces of the physical universe, are as immutable and self-congruent in the essential nature of things, as the laws of measure and of magnitude traced out by the mathematician; with this advantage in favour of what has been sometimes ignorantly talked of as contingent truth, that whereas the certainty of mathematical propositions depends on the fact that they are founded on self-limiting definitions of mere thoughts, with which no disturbing condition, not even the fiat of Omnipotence, can interfere, the certainty of physical and of moral laws flows from this, that they are facts, subject to no man's definition, and necessarily existing as normal manifestations of the great primary fact, which we call GOD. The variations therefore which undoubtedly are observed in human morals—variations peculiarly notable in the infancy and in the decline both of individuals and of races,—are not contradictions, but only partial, feeble, and inadequate expressions of immutable morality. The ebb of the tide, looked at from a local and narrow point of view, is a contradiction to the flow; but both flow and ebb are parts of the grand harmonious motion of the sleepless waters of ancient Ocean. Morals vary under varying conditions of society, as plants vary under more or less favourable conditions of growth, or landscapes under more or less happy incidences of solar light; but these variations, so far from contradicting each other, could not even exist with-

out a fundamental identity; as the element of likeness in the different members of a large family could not exist without a common parentage. And where there may not be a striking unity of expression, traceable through all the varieties of popular morality, there is always at least, as Mr. Lecky has well pointed out, a unity of tendency;<sup>1</sup> even as a plant, when it first spreads out the green lobes of its radical leaves, may present a very different appearance from the distinctive leafage of its perfect growth; but the type nothing the less is one, and the necessary law of the whole congruous growth lay in the unity of the germ. There is nothing accidental in nature; so neither in morals. All things are necessary; all things are self-consistent; all things are harmonious; all things upon a whole view of the whole are complete. The distinctive character therefore of such an ethical system as Christianity is to be sought not in the fundamental invariable absolute types of right and wrong, which are the same everywhere, but mainly in the following two things—*First*, In its method of operation and in the steam power, the strong convictions and fervid passions by which the moral machinery is set in motion; or, to adopt another simile, in the fountain-heads from which the necessary water-courses of a systematic social irrigation are supplied. *Secondly*, In the particular virtues which its method of operation and its moral steam, in conjunction with the nature of the materials acted on, brings on the stage with a certain preference. For though a moral system may, or rather must, include theoretically all

<sup>1</sup> Lecky, *History of European Morals*, vol. i., Introductory Discourse.

the virtues, and is justly blamed if it exclude one, even the smallest, yet from the narrowness of finite natures, and the laws of habit, it seems practically impossible that as soon as any moral system becomes a traditional law for great masses of men, there should not be manifested a strong tendency to put certain virtues into the foreground, while others are left to find their places without favour, or even with a certain amount of discouragement. All soils are not equally favourable to all plants ; and the most healthy climates, where human beings of the greatest amount of robustness and grace are produced, have never been free from peculiar diseases, springing from a source indissolubly intertwined with the conditions of their remarkable salubrity. Another influence also materially tends to give even the most large and comprehensive system of Ethics a certain apparent narrowness and one-sidedness in practice. A world-regenerating system of Ethics, such as Christianity, is not a thing, like a treatise on Logic, written in a book and laid on the shelf, and allowed quietly to work its way with whosoever may choose to take it up. It is an active, aggressive, invasive power ; it is a strong medicine to knock down a strong disease ; it is a charge of cavalry dashing onwards, like a storm, to break the solid squares of an opposing infantry, bristling with many spears. Such a movement is necessarily one-sided ; all movement is one-sided ; speculation only is catholic. We must not therefore expect Christianity, of all moral forces the most impetuous and the most imperious, to be free from this fault. It had to swoop down, so to speak, on violent wings from the spiritual side of our nature upon the sensualism of

the Greeks, otherwise it could not succeed ; and its most distinctive features will be found to spring mainly from this necessary attitude of imperious hostility. There is no time to temper blows in the moment of battle. A great victory is never gained by moderate blows ; though, when gained, a wise general will always know how to use it with moderation.

I will now proceed to attempt a sketch of Christian Ethics from the two points of view here indicated.

FIRST, Let us inquire what is the steam-power, the lever, the motive force of Christian Ethics. And here at once the most distinctive part of the Christian moral system meets us in the face ; it is presented to us prominently, essentially, radically as a religion. It is not merely connected with religion, not only, like the moral philosophy of Dr. Paley, willing to stamp its precepts with a religious sanction, and to found moral obligation upon the will of the Supreme Being ; much less, like the philosophy of Socrates, ready to fraternize with religion, and eager to prove with Heraclitus, the profoundest of the pre-Socratic thinkers, that all human rules of conduct are derived ultimately from the necessity of the divine nature.<sup>1</sup> It is more than all this ; it is a religion ; by its mere epiphany it forms a church ; in its starting-point, its career, and its consummation it is "a kingdom of Heaven upon earth." In its method of presentation, though not certainly in its contents, it is as different from its great ally Platon-

<sup>1</sup> See the doctrine of Heraclitus in Ritter and Preller's admirable compend—*Historia Philosophiæ Græco-Romanae*—one of the best manuals of the many that we owe to the erudition and judgment of the great German people.

ism as Platonism is from its great enemy, the Homeric theology ; for Platonism, however nearly allied to Christianity, is a philosophy and not a religion ; a philosophy which did not even propose to overthrow the Polytheistic faith, whose poet-theologer it had so rudely assaulted. The moral philosophy of the Greeks, indeed, generally was either a simple wisdom of life in the form of precepts loosely strung together, as in the early Gnostic poets, or it was a wisdom of life deduced from principles of reason, as in all the Socratic and post-Socratic teaching. But the Ethics of the Gospel came down upon men like a flash from Heaven ; suddenly, violently, fervidly and explosively, not with a curious apparatus of slowly penetrating arguments. There is no talk about reasons here at all ; the λόγος of St. John came afterwards and meant a very different thing. "*Repent ye, and be baptized, for the kingdom of Heaven is at hand !*" is the form of the Evangelical appeal, in which no argument is attempted or indeed required. Your conscience tells you that you are rebels against God ; as rebels you can only live under a curse ; the whole sense-besotted Greek and Roman world is evidently lying under a curse ; repent and be converted ; return to God and be saved ; to man there can be no safety anywhere except in God, who is the source of all good, and in Christ, who gave himself a living sacrifice that we might be redeemed from all evil. This is the whole style of the greatest moral Evangel the world has ever heard ; absolutely and simply an act of religion ; all immorality is departure from God, all morality return to God. In the Christian Ethics God is not a secondary figure ; he is not brought in merely for a sanction : he is the central sun of the

whole system, from whose bright fountain of perennial excellence all the little twinkling lamps of our minor moralities are lighted up. The individual virtues of a Christian man are merely the flower and the fruit of a living plant, of which the root is theology and the sap piety ; nay more, the piety accompanies the flower and the fruit, and imparts to them a fragrance and a flavour, which gives them more than half their charm. A rose without smell would still be a rose ; but what a world of difference to the sense and to the sentiment would the absence of that fine invisible essence imply ! Christian virtue, in fact, can no more exist without piety than Socratic virtue can exist without logic. Socrates was, no doubt, a remarkably pious man ; but, while the piety of Socrates was a strong shoot from his reason, the virtue of a Christian is the fair issue of his piety.

The distinct proof of what we have here stated will be found everywhere in the New Testament, but in the Acts of the Apostles specially rather than in the Gospels. For the ideal of Christian character we refer naturally to the Sermon on the Mount and to the character of our Lord as exhibited in the evangelic narrative ; but for the manner in which Christianity was presented to men, for the method of operation by which in so short a time it so wonderfully overcame the stern ritualism of the Jew and the fair sensualism of the Greek, we must look to the actual facts of the great early conversions as they are presented to us in the apostolic memoirs of Luke. Let us see therefore, in the first place, what we can learn from the early chapters of that most interesting narrative. Now, the starting-point here plainly is the effusion of the Holy Ghost, an influence which,



whether we take it on this first occasion as miraculous, according to the traditional understanding of the Church, or as something extraordinary but in the course of nature, is a phenomenon altogether different in kind from the action of arguments upon the ratiocinative faculty of the mind, and had indeed been preceded not by inductions or deductions, or analytic dissections, or any scholastic exertions at all, but by meetings for social prayer (i. 14)—prayer which is the great feeder of the moral nature of man when reverting to the original source of all moral life in the form of religion. It was therefore not in the philosophic way of debate and discussion, but in the religious way of inspiration that the regenerative afflatus of the first Christian Ethics came upon the Jewish and Hellenic world; and it worked, let us say, by a fervid moral contagion, not by the suasion of cool argument. And there can be no doubt, that if even in the intellectual world a wise ancient might justly say, *Nemo vir magnus sine aliquo afflatu divino unquam fuit*, much more in the world of moral and political action it is by the infection of noble passions that men are moved to any grand issues, not by the cogency of strong arguments. Melanchthon was as good a reasoner as Martin Luther, perhaps a better, but he had not the volcanic fire of his fellow; and it was an eruption of this fire only that could prevail to shake the stout pillars of the Popedom. And it was by an influence manifestly quite akin to the impetuous energetic eloquence of the great Saxon reformer, that by the first sermon of the Apostle Peter, as we read, great masses of men were suddenly pricked in their hearts, conscience-stung as we phrase it, and in one day three thousand

human beings, previously indifferent or hostile, were added to the new moral community afterwards called the Christian Church. Precisely similar in modern times has been the action of the so-called religious revivals, which, from the days of the Methodists downwards, have done so much in this country to rouse from a state of moral lethargy the most neglected and the most abandoned portions of the community. Of Martin Boos, the celebrated Bavarian evangelist, we are told that his "sermon was as if he poured forth flame;"<sup>1</sup> and not less striking were the moral effects of the eloquent Whitefield when he drew the tears in white gutters down the grimy cheeks of the congregated Bristol colliers, and, what is even more significant of his power, in Savannah elicited from the prudential pockets of sage Benjamin Franklin, sitting before the preacher with a stiff determination not to contribute, first a handful of coppers, then three or four silver dollars, and then five golden pistoles!<sup>2</sup> preachings of this kind have been the subject of scoffing with light-witted persons in all ages; but they stand firm as grave attestations of the fact that the Christian method of conversion, not by logical arguments, but by moral contagion and the effusion of the Holy Ghost, has, with the masses of mankind, always proved itself the most effective. Socrates did much more perhaps as a reformer of sinners than any preacher in the guise of a philosopher ever did; but he could not have done what Whitefield did with the colliers. The arguments of Socrates convinced the few; but the fervour of Peter, the loftiness of his religious position, and

<sup>1</sup> *Life of Martin Boos*, 1855, p. 25.

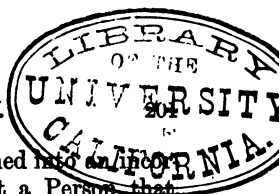
<sup>2</sup> *Life of Franklin in the Encyclopædia Britannica*.

the felt firmness of his historical foundation converted the many.

And this brings us to the second important point in the original attitude of Christianity, and the manner in which it moved the moral world. This point is the historical foundation on which the moral appeal stood; and this historical foundation was the miraculous life, death, and resurrection of the Founder of the ethical religion. It concerns us not to inquire here, whether Christ was a real person, or, as certain Germans with their ingenious whimsicality will have it, a mere myth; as little need we ask whether the miracles were really suspensions of the laws of nature, or were mere acts of remarkable power somewhat exaggerated by the wondering narrators; much less can it be necessary for the present argument to weigh the evidence for the great crowning miracle of the resurrection. Concerning these matters, every man must either judge for himself or take the authority of nearly two thousand years of effective Christian teaching as a sufficient guarantee. But what we have to do with here is simply this: that these facts were believed, that the Apostles stood upon these facts, and that the ethical efficiency of Christianity was rooted in these facts. Take the facts away, or the assured belief in the facts, and the existence of such an ethico-religious society as the Christian Church becomes, under the circumstances, impossible. Consider what an effect the personality of Socrates had in establishing what we with no great license of language may call the Socratic Church in Athens. The various schools of philosophy, first in Athens and then in Rome, were sects of that Church. Had Socrates not lived and died

with visible power and effect before men, the existence of these schools, fathered by this great teacher, would have been impossible. A person is the necessary nucleus round which all social organisms form themselves. But the personality of Socrates was a much less important element in the formation of the Socratic schools than that of Christ was in the formation of the Christian Church. Socrates was only a teacher—one who, like other teachers, might in time create disciples as wise, perhaps wiser than, himself; Christ was a redeemer, whose function as such could be performed by no vicar, and transmitted to no successor: the one was a help and a guide, the other a foundation of faith and a fountain of life. Socrates taught his disciples to become independent of him, and rely on their own perfected reason; from Christ His disciples always derive nourishment, as the branches from the vine. And if the relation of Christ to His disciples, conceived only as a living Saviour walking on the earth, was so much closer than that of Socrates to his disciples, how much more intimate does the relation become, when He who lived and died to redeem humanity from sin rose from the dead as a living guarantee that all who walked in His ways, should follow up their redemption from sin by a speedy victory over that yet stronger enemy, Death!<sup>1</sup> From the moment that the resurrection stood amongst the disciples as an accepted fact, the Founder of the religion was not merely a wonder-working man, a prophet and the greatest of all the prophets, but He was an altogether exceptional and miraculous Person, either

<sup>1</sup> ὁ Θεὸς ὁ ἀναγεννήσας ἡμᾶς εἰς ἐλπίδα ζῶσαν δι' ἀναστάσεως Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ ἐκ νεκρῶν.—1 Pet. i. 3.



God in some mysterious way combined into an incorporate unity with man, or at least a Person that compared with the common type and expression of humanity, might pass for God. The influence which the belief in the actual existence of such a human, and yet in so many regards superhuman, character as the Founder of their faith, must have exercised on the early preachers of the gospel, cannot easily be over-estimated. Plato and Plotinus often talk of the raptures with which the human soul would be thrilled if not only, as now, the shadows and types of the Beautiful, but the very absolute Beautiful itself, the *αὐτὸ τὸ καλόν*, stood revealed to mortal sight. But granting for the moment that the manifestation of such a vague abstraction is possible, it is quite certain that, when manifested, it could not possibly act upon men with anything like the power of a human Christ actually risen from the dead. Man, with all his range of imagination, is at bottom as much concrete as any creature, and as little capable of being moved by mere abstractions. Jesus Christ, and Him crucified; Christ risen from the dead; believe in Him—this was the short summation of that preaching of the gospel which regenerated the then world, lying as it did in all sorts of wickedness. See how emphatically the resurrection is alluded to as the main anchor in all the early preachings of the Apostles (Acts ii. 32; iii. 15; iv. 2; v. 30, etc.) And as to St. Paul, he declares again and again that if Christ be not risen, the faith of Christians is vain, and those to whom the world was indebted for its moral regeneration were justly to be accounted amongst the most miserable of men; a method of speaking which plainly implies that, in the Apostle's

estimation, the firm fact of a risen Saviour was the only real assurance that Christians had of a life beyond the grave. So true is the utterance of a distinguished modern divine that "the resurrection was the central point of the apostolic teaching, nay more, the central point of history, primarily of religious history, of which it is the soul. The resurrection is the one central link between the seen and the unseen."<sup>1</sup> Let this, therefore, stand firm as the main principle of any just exposition of the machinery by which the ethics of the gospel achieved the conquest of the world. The Church—"the peculiar people zealous for good works," of whom St. Peter speaks—was formed out of the world not by the clear cogency of logical arguments, but by the vivid belief in miraculous facts.

But the miraculous personality of the teacher, however essential to the proclamation and reception of the teaching, was not the teaching itself. There were doctrines of an essentially theological character, and strong emotions that only religion could excite, which operated along with the unique personality of the Founder in laying a firm foundation for the ethics of the gospel. The most important of these doctrines was the doctrine of the unity of the God-head. This is a matter with which in Christian countries we are now so familiar that not a few find it difficult to realize how prominent an element it was in the Christian creed, and how powerful must have been its action in the creation of a new school of morals in the midst of the heathen world. By the Fathers of the Church, however, in the first and second centuries, the ethical virtue of this element

<sup>1</sup> Westcott, *The Gospel of the Resurrection*. London, 1867.

was never overlooked; they knew only too well, from their own personal experience most of them, and all of them by what they saw written in the habits and maxims of a corrupt society, how easily Polytheism had lent itself to draw a beautiful veil over what was ugly, and to stamp the most debasing vices with consecration. Philosophers, like Xenophanes and Plato, in whose breasts these things had long ago roused a rebellious indignation, might well despair of converting to a pure morality a people who, though they might be sober on all the other days of the year, would think it necessary, as an act of piety, to appear publicly intoxicated on the feast of Dionysus. The salt of goodness, it is quite true, which kept the body of Polytheism so long from rotting, has often been overlooked, principally by the exaggeration of Christian writers, seldom remarkable for candour; and the early Fathers of the Church, engaged, as they were, in actual warfare with the many-headed foe, may well be excused if their zeal was not always accompanied by that fairness to which even error is entitled. But with the most honest purpose to do justice to the moral element of Polytheism, as we may find it exhibited most favourably perhaps in the living pictures of the Homeric poems, it cannot be denied that the obvious deduction from the Polytheistic creed was, in all cases to palliate, in some cases even to justify, vice; and that this deduction was often made we may gather from the familiar fact that the most illogical people even now suddenly become very acute reasoners, the moment it is necessary to defend their prejudices, or to protest against the amendment of their faults. In a system of faith, where every

instinct had its god, and every passion its patron-saint, it required either a rare training, or a remarkably healthy habit of mind to keep the low and the high in their just seats of subordination and supremacy. No doubt the more imperative moral virtues to a well-constituted Heathen mind were conceived as represented by Jove, who was the real moral governor of the world; and the supremacy of Zeus in Olympus was a sufficient assertion of the superiority which belongs to the moral law in the little republic of the soul; but as the son of Kronos in the Greek heaven was only a limited monarch, and often, as the *Iliad* plainly indicates, obliged to wink at the contravention of his own commands by the unruly aristocracy of the skies, so Polytheism could never invest the *τὸ ἡγεμονικόν*—the regulating principle of the soul—with the absolute sovereignty which to its nature rightfully belongs. Christianity, as an essentially monotheistic faith, applied a perfect remedy to this evil. The highest part of man's nature was now the only sacred part. The flesh, so far from being glorified and worshipped, was denounced, degraded, and desecrated as a synonym for all corruption. The deification of mere sensuous pleasures, which with Polytheists had passed for orthodox, was now impossible; the moral law became supreme; and surely the sanction which this law requires can never be conceived in more imperative terms than as the distinctly enunciated command of the all-powerful, all-wise, and all-beneficent Father of the human family. No sanction, deduced from a mere reasoning process, can ever approach this in broad practical efficiency. It is the impersonated, incarnated, and enthroned Reason, to which all



reasonable creatures owe an instinctive and a necessary obedience.

But there is another corollary to a monotheistic creed, which, in estimating the influence of Christian faith on Christian Ethics, is by no means to be overlooked. If there is only one God, the father of the whole human race, then there is only one family; all men are brethren; nationality ceases; philanthropy, or love of men in the widest sense of the word, becomes natural; mere patriotism has now only a relative value; Leonidas is no longer the model hero; the Jew is no longer of the one chosen people; and the Greek, full of wisdom, and full of conceit, must condescend to call the ignorant barbarian his brother. This breaking down of the middle wall of partition between Jew and Gentile, between every nation and its neighbour, removed two of the greatest obstructions which have ever stood in the way of a generous morality, in the shape of what Lord Bacon would have called idols of the place and of the race; these idols could be worshipped no longer; and no shibboleth of separation could be mumbled to consecrate the unreasonable prejudices which every nation is so apt to entertain against its neighbour. No doubt towards the propagation of these catholic and cosmopolitan principles, ancient philosophy also, and specially Stoicism, contributed its share;<sup>1</sup> the consolidation of the Roman empire and the policy of the Roman emperors worked in the same direction;

<sup>1</sup> To persons ignorant of Greek, who may wish to receive a vivid impression of the moral influence of Stoicism, I recommend Long's *Translation of Antoninus*, Lecky's *History of European Morals*, and Farrar's *Seekers after God*.

but the monotheistic creed of the Christian Church, proclaimed with such dignity and moral courage by St. Paul in his discourse on the Hill of Mars, supplied the only effective leverage. Compared with what the preaching of St. Paul did for the grand idea of humanity and fraternity, all that modern science, modern political theories, modern commerce, and modern philosophies have achieved or may yet achieve, can only be counted as a very small supplement.

The immortality of the soul, the second coming of Christ, and the final judgment of the world, form together a group of doctrines, the relation of which to moral practice is too deeply felt to require much discussion in this place. Perhaps, however, everybody does not sufficiently consider how peculiarly Christian these doctrines are, and how the belief in them, and the moral issues of such belief, must necessarily stand and fall with the faith in some such historical religion as has hitherto formed the framework of the Churches of Christendom. For however these doctrines might be dimly conceived and vaguely believed by the people who wrote D. M. upon their tombstones, and however solemnly imagined and grandly depicted they were in the eloquent discourses of the great philosopher of Idealism, there are few mistakes greater than to accept these dim conceptions and grand imaginings as a proof that the doctrine of the immortality of the soul, as a point of Polytheistic faith, performed the same function in moulding the morality of the ancient Greeks and Romans that it does at the present day among modern Christian peoples. A single quotation—one of the most trite—from Homer

will suffice to show how utterly unfounded such an idea is. In the Cimmerian visit to the unseen world, the wandering king of Ithaca is made to encounter the hot thane of Thessaly, pacing with a stately fierceness through the Elysian fields, like a king among the shades. On being complimented to this effect by his visitor, the son of Peleus replies—

“Name me not death with praiseful words, noble Ulysses ; I  
Would sooner be a bonded serf, the labourer's tool to ply  
To a small cottar on the heath with wealth exceeding small,  
Than be the Lord of all the Shades in Pluto's gloomy hall.”

A people who could think and speak thus of the state of souls after departure from the body, could not derive much practical advantage from belief in immortality. That belief indeed was held so loosely by the mass of the Greek people that it may rather be described as a dim imagination than as a definite conviction. People were rather unwilling to believe that their beloved human friends had vanished into the realm of nothingness, than convinced that they had gone to where on any account it would be at all desirable to go. To a few select heroes no doubt, men like Menelaus, of divine extraction, and divine affinity, a really enviable abode after death in the cloudless and stormless islands of the blest was by popular tradition assigned ; a few perpetrators also of enormous crimes, red-hand murderers, open blasphemers, and traitors who sold their country for gold were consigned for ever to the ensanguined scourge of the Furies in those flaring regions which the genius of Virgil and Dante has so vividly portrayed ; but if the belief in these exceptional cases inspired some to acts of unwonted heroism and

deterred others from deeds of abhorred foulness, the very good and the very bad in the world are too few in number to admit of the idea that the motives which either stir them to acts of exceptive virtue or deter them from acts of abnormal crime should have any influence in determining the conduct of the great masses. And as for the philosophers, it was Socrates only and Plato who in their teaching gave any special emphasis to the doctrine of the immortality of the soul; and no man who has read the most familiar accounts of the defence which the former delivered to the jury at his trial, or of his last moments as reported by Plato in the *Phædo*, can have carried off the impression that the great father of moral philosophy taught that doctrine with any dogmatic decision or certainty. We must say therefore, with Dr. Paley, who, though incapable of sounding great depths, had a very clear head, and was a very sensible man, that it was the gospel, and the gospel alone, which "brought life and immortality to light," and with it introduced whatever real power in elevating or strengthening the moral nature of man such a doctrine, when held as a habitual conviction, must exercise over the masses of men. What Socrates contemplated calmly as a probable contingency, St. Paul and the early Christians gloried in as a grand culmination and a triumphant result. And the effective influence of this firm faith on society has been to give an infinitely greater dignity to human life, to increase infinitely the moral worth of the individual, and to add a support of wonderful efficacy to those states and stages of toilsome existence which stand so much in need of such hopeful consolation. That it has always acted, and

must always act, as a strong aid to virtuous conduct can scarcely be denied, though they of course are poor philosophers and ignoble men who think that virtue could not possibly exist in the world without the belief in immortality. There are many motives that force the masses of men to be virtuous, according to the respectable righteousness of the Scribes and Pharisees, altogether independent of any prospect of rewards and punishments in a future state; and as for men of a more than commonly delicate moral sensibility—persons to whom a life in baseness and foulness would under any conditions be intolerable—it is not to be imagined that they would be more virtuous from the prospect of an eternity of bliss, than they are from the fear of a short season of shame. These men will always live nobly, for the same reason that whatever they do they must do well. If they play cricket, they will play a good game; if they ride, they will ride well; and if they boat, they will boat well; and, for the same reason, if they live, they will live well—not because they expect a reward, but because they have no pleasure in living badly. To them vice is always rottenness, putrescence, and loathsomeness; and no man will consciously condemn himself to these who knows what soundness means.

There is one marked peculiarity about Christian Ethics, growing directly out of a religious root, and closely connected with certain theological doctrines, which, though indicated in some of the previous paragraphs, demands special mention here. We mean what Dr. Chalmers called its aggressive attitude. The idea of Duty is not necessarily aggressive; a man may perform his duty quietly, as the spheres

move in their orbits, without daring, or even desiring, to meddle with the movements of other members of the great social machine. Even Christian Churches in quiet and flat times, as the last century for instance, have been known to content themselves with the unobtrusive performance of a certain round of familiar pieties, undisturbed by any desire to make moral inroads into the domain of remote or even adjacent heathenism. But this is certainly not the normal or flourishing state of any Christian Church ; not the natural state indeed of any sect or society, whether religious or philosophical, professing to possess a healing medicine for the cure of diseased souls. We accordingly found in the first discourse that Socrates was in his attitude, however pleasant and playful on the surface, at bottom very earnestly aggressive ; it was this aggressiveness, in fact, that raised up against him the hostility of those spiteful little individuals to whom more than to popular ill-will he owed his martyr-death. He asserted, as we have seen, a divine mission, and acted as a missionary, though always in the manner of a reasoner rather than as a preacher. But the aggressive element in early Christianity was much stronger than in Socrates ; as any one may see at a glance by comparing the biographical career of St. Paul with that of the Athenian philosopher. And the causes of this were more than one. In the first place, the whole Hebrew nature was more fervid, more impassioned, more prophetic than the Hellenic ; and again, the autocratic character which belongs to all monotheism imparted to the moral message of the missionaries an urgency and a lofty intolerance, which in an atmosphere compounded of polytheism in its lower

sphere and of logic in its upper sphere was impossible. A divine command superadded to fervid human sympathies necessarily creates a mission in the person who is the subject of them; but the divine command is much more stringent from an autocratic Jehovah than from a limited monarch like Jove, and the fervour of human sympathy is more intense in proportion as the offence of the rebels against the sovereign authority is looked upon as more heinous. We are brought back therefore again to the great doctrine of the Divine Unity, if we would make it fully evident to ourselves why St. Paul was so much more aggressive than Socrates: Socrates was only partly a missionary, and the messenger of a god whose authority was limited by an inferior but acknowledged authority in other gods; St. Paul was a missionary of the one true God, to whose authority there could be no limit, and to whose command there could be no contradiction. From this principle of divine autocracy there necessarily grew up the conception of sin, not as folly merely and imperfection, but as contumacy, rebellion, and treason; and the conviction of the exceeding sinfulness of sin and the exceeding misery of the sinner became the strongest spur to the missionary activity of the Christian preachers, and gave a true moral sublimity to an aggressive attitude, which in a mere reasoner had appeared impertinent. Nothing indeed is more remarkable than the contrast between the strong colours in which sin is painted by the writers of the New Testament and its more venial aspect in the mild regard of the philosopher. Aristotle can surrender a whole generation of young men to the dominion of *πάθος* and think nothing more about it,

They are as incapable of moral ideas, these young sensualists, as swine are of cleanliness ; let them wallow in the mire for a season ; we shall speak to them, when they have outgrown their animalism. But the converted Pharisee who wrote his burning epistles to the young Christian churches in magnificent Rome and luxurious Ephesus used very different language. Sin with him is a very serious offence, on account of which the curse of God lies on the whole world. Sinners, whether old or young, are by nature the children of wrath ; and by the act and fact of the transgression of divine law, so utterly cast down and degraded from the proper human dignity, that they require to be born again, and baptized with a fire-baptism before they can be purified from their foulness and restored to the original rights and privileges which belonged to them, as to all men, in right of their divine fatherhood. Hence the strongly accentuated opposition between flesh and spirit (Romans vii. viii. ; 1 Pet. iv. 3, 4) which no doubt Aristotle, as we have seen above, also mentions ; but in the Stagirite it is only an incidental recognition ; in the New Testament it is a pervading and overwhelming power, a force which possesses the atmosphere, a moral storm, which, swooping violently down from the dark-throned seat of the Supreme Regent, tears the cloak of self-righteousness from the shivering sinner, and exposes him in all his bareness. Plato also and Plotinus use very Christian language when they tell us that to be partakers of true moral beauty the soul requires a *κάθαρσις* or purification from its natural or acquired foulness, and that the necessity of this purification was symbolically indicated in the



mysteries.<sup>1</sup> Very true ; but here again Plato wrote calmly for the few, Paul preached fervidly for the many. And this word *purification*, as connected with the Christian idea of the exceeding sinfulness of sin, and the necessity of an ingrafting of a higher moral life by the operation of the Divine Spirit, leads me necessarily to specialize the doctrine of the Atonement as performing a peculiar function in the ethical attitude and moral efficiency of the gospel. The doctrine of the Atonement arises as the necessary consequence of the Christian conception of sin as a polluting, perverting, rebellious, and treasonable principle. An error is reasoned away, but filth must be washed away ; guilt must be atoned ; the offender must pray for forgiveness ; and the free grace of the Sovereign must restore the traitor to the place and the protection which belong to him as a loyal subject. Put into a strictly articulate form, this doctrine of atonement, not less than its correlative the exceeding sinfulness of sin, especially when pushed to its extreme of logical consistency by the so-called federal theologians, is apt to give, and has always given, more or less just cause of offence to speculative minds ; but in that broad practical aspect in which it was originally presented to the world, before men began to turn a fervid faith into a curious theology, there can be no doubt that it operated most beneficially in intensifying that hatred of sin which is the mother of all

<sup>1</sup> Ἔστι γὰρ δὴ ὡς ὁ παλαιὸς λόγος, καὶ ἡ σωφροσύνη, καὶ ἡ ἀνδρεία καὶ ἡ πᾶσα ἀρετὴ, καθάρσις, καὶ ἡ φρόνησις αὐτῇ διὸ καὶ αἱ τελεταὶ ὁρθῶς αἰνιττονταὶ τὸν μὴ κεκαθαρμένον καὶ ἐν ᾧδου κείσεσθαι ἐν βορβόρῳ, ὅτι τὸ μὴ καθαρὸν βορβόρῳ διὰ κἀκὴν φίλον, ὅλα δὲ καὶ ὅες, οὐ καθαροὶ τὸ σῶμα, χαίρουσι τῷ τοιοῦτῳ.—PLOTINUS, *Enn.* i. 6, p. 55 ; edit. Kirchhoff, i. 6.

holiness, and in enabling many a guilt-laden soul to start on the career of a regenerate life with a comfortable lightness and an unfettered speed, which from no other source could have flowed so readily.

The plan of this discourse leads us in the next place to consider the individual virtues to which, by their radical connexion with religion and a theological creed, Christian Ethics have shown a preference. But before attempting this it is obvious to remark how, by the atmosphere of piety in which they grow, and the theological soil in which they are rooted, the Christian virtues, as a whole and individually, are elevated to a much higher platform than belongs to any system of mere moral philosophy ; and from this point of view we can understand how the divines of the school called Evangelical have been led to look down with such contempt as they generally do on every form of Christian preaching in which a round of mere moral duties is held up as in itself capable of performing the functions of a truly Christian life. The Evangelicals, narrow and bigoted as they too often are, especially in points of artificial and traditional orthodoxy, which they are unable to separate from the essence of the gospel, were quite right in this matter. It is not the mere duties performed, but the motives from which, and the inspiration by which, they are performed, that make the moral life of a truly Christian man so excellent. It is not merely that he is morally correct in all his intercourse with his fellow-men ; not merely that he is richly furnished perhaps with all those born amiabilities which an acute Scotch speculator has designated as but the painted masks of virtue ;<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Professor Ferrier on Consciousness ; *Works*, vol. i. p. 221.

the world may shower its plaudits on such cheap forms of native goodness as loudly as it pleases; Christian morality, by virtue of its lofty religious inspiration, aims at something more; the mere righteousness of the Scribes and Pharisees it looks upon as an attainment utterly unworthy of a high moral ambition, as a vulgar something, the contentment with which would indicate an entire absence of that pure moral ideal, with the acknowledgment of which a religious morality—a system of ethics founded on the worship of the one true God—must necessarily start. Whatever morality the world may possess, as absolutely indispensable for the common movements of the social machine, Christianity, of course, accepts, but makes no account of in its characteristic appeals. It is rather the low maxims, the false authorities, and the spurious virtues, mixed up with the vulgar morality of the many, that it most mercilessly exposes and protests against. "*Be not conformed to this world, but be ye transformed in the renewing of your minds.*" "*But you are an elect people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation.*" Such is the lofty tone which it assumes, and from the days of St. Paul to Xavier and Howard has justified the assumption amply by its deeds. It aspires not merely to be moral; it would be the poetry of morality in a world where prose is the common currency. It intends to hold up to the whole human family a divine ideal of social heroism, which may some day be universally admired but which never can be universally enacted.

Let us now look at the beautiful portraiture of the Christian man in the detail of his most characteristic virtues.

And first, as the starting-point here, we must

observe that the Christian is pre-eminently equipped with that self-denial and self-control, and what we generally call strength of character, which are the necessary postulates of all moral excellence. A man who will take the world easily will never take it grandly; *χαλεπὰ τὰ καλὰ omnia præclara tam difficilia quam rara sunt*: all excellent things are difficult; the Christian recognises the difficulty, but delights in it as the stout old Roman did in the foes which added fuel to his victories, or as the strong modern engineer does in mountains, that he may show the triumph of his art in boring through them or winding round them. Modern sensualists and preachers of the low doctrine that pleasure is the only good have delighted to fling discredit on this grand Christian virtue of self-denial, as if anything great ever was performed without it. The man of genius denies himself in a thousand ways that he may work out a perfect body for the imaginary ideals which possess him; the great soldier denies himself through leagues of hardship that he may repel the rude invader and preserve the honour of his country unstained; and the man of virtue must deny himself also, if virtue is a thing which a creature of high enterprise and lofty purpose may reasonably have to do with. To lie in the lap of pleasure may be the highest enjoyment of which a feeble character is capable; the alternation betwixt sensuous languor and sensuous excitement may be the only grateful change of which a predominantly sensuous nature can be made to partake; but a strong man must have something difficult to do; and the strong Christian man has to "work out his salvation with fear and trembling;" to mortify the body, lest being over-

indulged it should learn to be the master instead of the servant of the soul ; and "laying aside every weight, and the sin which more easily besets him," learn to "run with patience the race which is set before him." What race? The race of realizing as much goodness as possible in his own personal life and in the life of that society of which he is a part, by the twofold process of nursing virtues and weeding out vices : an ideal which never can be reached by those who commence life, after the Epicurean fashion, with a low calculation of pleasures and pains, but by those only who are inspired by the vision of what Plato preached as divine ideas, and Paul as divine commands. The recognition of a divine ideal in some shape or other is the first step to the prosecution of a divine life ; and this alone can supply the inspiration which makes difficulty easy, educes pleasure from pain, and converts the most severe acts of self-denial into the materials of an elevating warfare, and the occasion of a glorious triumph.

Very closely connected with the stern self-denial and the manly strength of character so conspicuous in the first Christians was their moral courage. It requires very little knowledge of the world and experience of life to be made aware, in the case of those who are capable of being made aware of these things, that the general habitude of the world is not moral courage, but moral cowardice. The majority of men, like the majority of dogs I presume, are not physical cowards ; the dog is naturally a fighting animal, and so is man. But that the majority of men are moral cowards is certain. No consideration is so powerful with schoolboys as that of being laughed at for any singularity in dress or appearance ; the slavery of

fashion among grown-up persons is founded partly on the same dread ; and the fear of standing in a minority restrains many a man in public life from giving voice to a salutary truth, and planting a gag on the barking mouth of popular error. I have myself been present at meetings of corporate bodies, where I gave my suffrage, confident that I was right in acting consistently on a plain principle of common honesty ; and after the vote was taken I was told confidentially by some of those who had voted against my views, that they had a strong conviction I was in the right, only they could not venture to vote with me in the face of such an overwhelming majority ! This is the moral courage of the world. ‘Have any of the Scribes and Pharisees believed in him ? If so, we will speak out ; if not, we keep silence.’ This tendency to follow authority is in many persons, no doubt, the necessary consequence of their own ignorance ; ignorance is always afraid, and it knows by a sure instinct that its only safety lies in being led by superior knowledge. This no one can blame. But when a man acts against his own conviction in giving his vote as a member of a corporate body, or in a political assembly, to shield himself from the indignation or to gain the favour of an unreasonable multitude,—when, as in pure democracy, the question of right and wrong never comes before a man at all, but the one rule of political life simply is to submit to what such and such a local majority may choose to dictate,—this is sheer cowardice and simple slavery, from which a man of honourable and independent mind, not tainted with the baseness of democratic life, must shrink with abhorrence. And so in fact we do find that in democratic countries, where all

things are controlled by political cliques, who dictate the local policy, to which the puppet called a Member of Parliament, or a Deputy, is expected to swear, men of independent spirit, manly courage, and large intelligence are found systematically to shrink from the arena. How different from this demoralizing miasma is the atmosphere which we breathe in the New Testament! There a single manly individual stands forward, and in the name of God solemnly calls upon men to renounce the dearly-cherished errors, and to trample under foot the warmly-worshipped idols of a whole people. "*If it be lawful in the sight of God to hearken unto men rather than unto God, judge ye !*" This is what Peter said, speaking the truth boldly, in the face of roaring multitudes, frowning dignitaries, and lines of bristling lances. A religion in which such rare manhood was as common as cowardice is common in general society, if it was not crushed in the bud, as Protestantism was in Bohemia, could not but grow up to a mighty tree in the end. The stoical death of the gladiators in the Colosseum was wont to draw admiration, and sometimes even to extort pity, from the spectators; but their death was compulsory, and the stoicism of their last moments only a theatrical grace to fall decently before an applauding multitude. The Christian, on the other hand, whether as a fearless preacher or as an unflinching martyr, made a voluntary protest, and chose a self-imposed torture. If he was not a fool or a madman, he was a hero; and the heroism he displayed was of such a high order, that being repeated only for a generation or two, it caused the combined force of popular prejudice and traditional authority in the heathen world to blush itself into a

not unwilling subjection. So much of lofty courage and of genuine manhood did subtle Greece and powerful Rome learn from the moral missionaries of poor and despised Palestine !

Let us now cast a glance on that most characteristic and most widely bruited of all the Christian virtues, viz., LOVE ; which under the name of Charity (not *Ἔρως*, the old satellite of Venus, but *ἀγάπη*), St. Paul in a famous chapter eulogizes as at once the crown and the epitome of all virtues most peculiarly Christian. We read also that "Love is the fulfilling of the law ;" and a watchword so deliberately chosen and so emphatically sounded must always be pregnant with significance as to the moral character and efficiency of the religion to which it belongs. Now the plain significance which this blazon bears on the face of it is this, that if Love be the blossom of all virtue, the root of all vice is the opposite of Love, viz., Selfishness. And whosoever has looked into the moral world with any faculty of generalizing, will not fail to have observed that every form of vice is only a diverse manifestation of that untempered, voracious, and altogether monstrous egotism, which, in order to purchase for itself a slight advantage or a momentary titillation, would not scruple to plunge a whole universe into disorder and ruin ; while, on the other hand, the virtuous man lives as much by sympathy with the desires of others as by the gratification of his own, and is ready at any moment to dash the bowl of blessedness from his lips, if he must purchase it by the consignment to misery of a single human soul. And if we look at the lower organism of society, we shall find, that as in the republic of science knowledge prospers exactly in proportion as



the pure love of truth prevails, so in communities of human beings, the measure of the amount of that brotherly love which man feels to man, taken in its intensity and in its diffusion, furnishes an exact test of the amount of moral excellence and consequent happiness—as distinguished from mere material prosperity—which is found in any place. The greatest difficulties, indeed, which society has to encounter, spring fundamentally from a deficiency of brotherly love,—from every grade of carelessness, indifference, and coldness, down to niggardliness, shabbiness, and the wretched mania of hoarding jealously what he who hoards is afraid to use. Poor-laws, for instance, which are generally looked upon as a necessary evil, exist only because those social associations to which the administration of charity naturally belongs, viz., in a Christian country the Christian churches, are not powerful or zealous enough adequately to do their duty in relieving human misery; that is to say, because Love, which is professedly the soul of those associations, is either not intense enough where it exists, or not sufficiently diffused, to provide the necessary aid; and thus people are driven to supply the want of voluntary love in the community by the exaction of compulsory rates, which may, indeed, save a few individuals from starvation, but which certainly produce the double evil of weakening the healthy habit of self-support through all classes of the community, and of stopping the fountain-heads of that natural flow of brotherly aid, which is a virtue only so long as it is voluntary. Now to this selfishness, which may without exaggeration be termed the endemic taint of all human associations, Christianity has applied the antidote of Love, in the

triple form of love to Christ, love to the brethren, and love to the human race ;—love to Christ as the incarnate type of unselfish benevolence and noble self-sacrifice ; love to the brethren as fellow-soldiers in the same glorious human campaign ; love to all men, as sheep of one common fold, which the further they have strayed the more diligently they are to be sought for. How much more intensely and extensively than in any other association this Love has operated in the Christian churches, from the days of Dorcas and her weeping widows down to Florence Nightingale and her Crimean campaign, need not be told ; nine-tenths of the most active benevolence of the day in this country are Christian in their origin and in their character ; and even those persons the favourite watchwords of whose social ethics are borrowed not from Christ but from Epicurus, will be found to have added a strange grace to the philosophy which they profess by a light borrowed from the religion which they disown. And if we inquire what are the causes of this superior prominence given to active benevolence in the Christian scheme of ethics, we shall find, as in other instances, that the peculiar character of the ethical fruit depends on the root of religion by which the plant is nourished, and the theological soil in which it was planted. For surely it requires very little thought to perceive that the root of all that surpassing love of the human brotherhood lies in the well-known opening words of the most catholic of prayers—“ *Our FATHER which art in Heaven ;*” the aspect also of sin as a contumacy and a rebellion, and a guilt drawing down a curse, necessarily led to a more aggressive philanthropy, with the view

of achieving deliverance from that curse ; but, above all, the doctrine of the immortality of the soul, and the terrible consequences necessarily involved in the idea of an eternal banishment from the sunshine of the Divine presence, has created an amount of social benevolence and missionary zeal which under any less potent stimulus would have been impossible. The miseries of the more neglected and outcast part of humanity present an entirely different aspect to the calm Epicurean and to the zealous Christian. To the Christian the soul of the meanest savage and of the most degraded criminal is still an immortal soul. As when a conflagration bursts out in a high turret, where a little child is sleeping within the near enswathment of the flames, some adventurous fireman boldly climbs the ladder, and rushing through the suffocating smoke, snatches the little innocent from the embrace of destruction ; so the Christian apostle flings himself into the eager host of idolatrous worshippers, and rejoices with exceeding joy when he saves if it were but one poor soul from the jaws of the destroying Siva to whom he was sold. But, as men's actions are the offspring of their convictions, the Epicurean will find no spur strong enough to shake him out of his easy-chair at such a spectacle of human degradation. Let the poor sinner be worshipping Siva on the banks of the Ganges, or committing slow suicide by what, in the language of the Celtic islands, is strangely called the water of life,<sup>1</sup> your easy sensuous philosopher needs not vex himself about the matter. *Poor idiot ! poor sot ! poor devil ! with his little feeble flame of smoky light which he calls life, let him flicker on another moment, or let him be*

<sup>1</sup> *Usque-beatha*—whisky.

*snuffed out, it matters not ; another bubble has burst on the surface of the waters, and the mighty ocean of cosmic vitality flows on as full and as free and as fathomless as before !*

In the estimation of Christian love one of the most interesting points is its strongly pronounced contrast with what has been called Platonic love. As for that which is commonly called love in novels and in life, though capable of affording a very exquisite bliss in its little season, it is a matter with which mere puberty and the bloom of physical life has so much to do, that except in the way of regulation (which is anything but an easy matter), it does not come under the category of morals at all ; only this general remark may be made with regard to it, that in all well-conditioned human beings it springs originally from a certain affinity of souls shining through the body, as much as from the mere attractions of physical beauty ; and in so far as this is the case, the purely physical instinct is elevated into the sphere of genuine Platonic love. Now, what is Platonic love ? As described by the great philosopher of Idealism in the *Phædrus*, its root lies plainly in the rapturous admiration of excellence, and its consummation in the metamorphosis of the admirer into the perfect likeness of that which he admires ; whereas Christian love, most characteristically so called, has its root in an infinite depth of divine tenderness, and for its fruit broad streams of human pity and grand deeds of human kindness. Platonic love is more contemplative and artistic ; Christian love more practical and more fruitful ; the one is the luxury of an intellectual imagination, the other the appetite of a moral enthusiasm.

It would be doing injustice to Christian love, however, to suppose that it has nothing at all in common with intellectual admiration, and that its only spring of movement is pity. "Visiting the fatherless and widows in their affliction," though in our present imperfect state the most characteristic, is not absolutely the most essential, feature in its exercise. If it were so, indeed, the Christian would never be comfortable except in the midst of misery; as a nurse can ply her vocation only at the bed of the sick or the wounded. But in fact his infinite tenderness for the lost sinner is produced and heightened by his experience of joy from communion with saints; and the contemplation and imitation of the image of moral perfection in the person of the great Captain of his salvation sustains him in his unwearied and often apparently hopeless endeavours to gather in recruits to serve under that so glorious captainship. We shall therefore justly say that without a Platonic love, that is, a fine spiritual passion for the character and person of Christ, the performance of the thousand and one works of social charity and mercy for which the Christian is so famous would be impossible. But we may say further, that the picture of Charity given in that wonderful chapter of St. Paul is very far from confining the sphere of Christian human-heartedness to that field of healing and of comforting in which so many charitable institutions in all Christian countries are the watch-towers. His picture evidently exhibits the ideal of a human being, not merely in the habit of lifting the fallen, healing the sick, and ministering, as the good Samaritan did, to those who may have fallen into the hand of robbers—these are extra-

ordinary occurrences, which will excite even the most sluggish to extraordinary demonstrations of human sympathy,—but the apostle of the Gentiles will have it that in our daily intercourse with our fellow-men we learn to live their lives sympathetically as intimately and as completely as we live our own; that we study on all occasions to identify ourselves with their position and feelings and interests, and then only pass a judgment on their conduct. “*Charity suffereth long, and is kind; charity envieth not; charity vaunteth not itself, is not puffed up, doth not behave itself unseemly, seeketh not her own, is not easily provoked, thinketh no evil; rejoiceth not in iniquity, but rejoiceth in the truth; beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things.*” What a problem is here, what a lesson of humanity, of catholicity, and of something far more human than that mere toleration, which the nations of Christendom have taken now nearly two thousand years to learn, since the first preaching of the gospel, and are scarcely learning even now! How much of our daily judgments, spoken and printed, seems leavened in any degree by the genuine humanity and manifest justice of this divine ideal? “Speaking the truth in love” is the acknowledged law of Christian intercourse; speaking lies in hatred were often a more appropriate text for certain large sections of British practice. We ought to pass judgment against our brother on our knees, fearful to offend; we do it rather, not seldom with pride and insolence and impertinence, mounted on the triumphal car of our own conceit, riding rough-shod over the real or imagined faults of our brother. So far does the ideal of Christian love, in the preaching of the

Christian apostle, transcend its reality in the lives of men who, if not Christians, at least breathe a Christian atmosphere, and ought to have received some benefit from the inhalation !

FORGIVENESS OF INJURIES is one of the special fruits of Christian charity, which has never been denied its due meed of acknowledgment, though not unaccompanied sometimes with the sarcastic observation that the pious zeal of Christian men has generally been more apt to flame into hatred than their love to blossom into forgiveness. No man has yet been able to say of Christians generally, as one may often have remarked justly of Quaker ladies, that they have too much milk in their blood ; nor do British and French and German wars seem to have abated very much in intensity for the want of a Christian text saying—*Thou shalt love thy friends and hate thine enemies !* Perhaps, also, some scholar may be able to string together from the pages of rare old Plutarch a longer chain of pretty specimens of lofty forgiveness of enemies than can readily be picked from modern Christian biographies. In the life of Pericles, by that mellow old Bœotian, I remember to have read that on one occasion this great statesman had to endure for a whole day in the agora a succession of impertinent and irritating attacks from one of those waspish little creatures who love to infest the presence of goodness ; and he endured it with such untroubled composure that, without taking the slightest notice of his assailant, he executed quietly some incidental matters of business, whose urgency demanded immediate attention. In the evening the orator returned to his house, still pursued by the gibes and scurrilities of his spitefu

little adversary. But the great man remained unmoved ; and as he entered his own gate, quietly said to the janitor—*Take a lamp and show that gentleman back to his house !* A similar but more serious instance of large-minded forgiveness of enemies is recorded by the same author in his life of Dion, the noble Syracusan who about the middle of the fourth century before Christ made a brilliant dash upon Sicily, similar to that which in the middle of the last century Prince Charles Edward Stuart made upon Great Britain, with this difference, that while the one succeeded gloriously in his well-calculated enterprise, the other with his mock-sublime rashness ludicrously failed. This Dion, after having planted himself on the seat of power abandoned by the worthless usurper, found the cause of constitutional order, of which he was the champion, suddenly endangered by the intrigues of an ambitious demagogue called Heracleides ; but his plots were timeously discovered, and political wisdom seemed to call upon the representative of public order to prevent the recurrence of such dangerous dissensions by the death of the conspirator. But the generosity of the disciple of Plato prevailed over the severity that would have guided a common politician. Dion forgave the offender ; only, however, as it soon appeared, that the fox chased out of one hole might begin to burrow in another. In this case the Syracusan Platonist behaved like a modern Quaker—nobly as concerned the sentiment of the man, foolishly considering his position as a statesman ; but while no sensible man might approve of such conduct in a ruler, every man feels that the heathen here performed an act of which, so far as motive is con-



cerned, the most accomplished Christian might be proud. Let the Greeks and Romans therefore have their praise in this matter ; let " seekers after God " in heathen times be put forward prominently as ensamples to those who in Christian times rejoice to think that they have found Him ;<sup>1</sup> nor let sympathy be refused to noble deeds because performed from somewhat different motives. The great heathen forgave his enemies because he was too high-minded to allow himself to be discomposed by petty assailants, and because a great indignation seems wasted upon a paltry offence ; the true Christian forgives his enemies because he loves them too fervidly to have any room for hatred, and because his swelling pity overwhelms his wrath. There is no sin in the magnanimous pride of the heathen ; there is more humanity in the quick sympathy of the Christian. Anyhow, Christianity may claim this peculiar merit, that it has set up that type of conduct as a general law for every man, which among the ancients was admired as the exceptive virtue of the few ; and Voltaire certainly revealed one source of his uncompromising hostility to the Christian faith, and showed himself as far below the ideal of heathen as of Christian magnanimity, when he acted so that one of his most illustrious disciples could say of him that " he never forgives, and never thinks any enemy beneath his notice." <sup>2</sup>

One of the most interesting of the contrasts generally drawn between Christian and heathen ethics, is that which concerns the very difficult virtue of SELF-ESTIMATE. " Let every man," says St. Paul,

<sup>1</sup> Read Mr. Farrar's delightful little work, *Seekers after God*.

<sup>2</sup> Burton's *Life of David Hume*, vol. ii. p. 195.

“strive not to think of himself beyond what he ought to think, but soberly, according as God has divided to every man the measure of faith.” And accordingly we find that in the lives of eminent Christians, as well as in formal treatises on Christian ethics, humility has always had a prominent place assigned to it in the roll of the virtues. But here again we must beware of running into a vulgar extreme, by imagining that the Greeks and Romans knew nothing of this virtue, and that they systematically fostered pride and self-importance. It is no doubt true, as every schoolboy knows, that the word *ταπεινός*, which in classical Greek signifies *mean* and *paltry*, in New Testament Greek is used to designate that sort of person who thinks of himself modestly, or, as St. Paul in the verse quoted says, “soberly;” but the mere change in the shade of colour belonging to certain words when passing from Attic into Alexandrian Greek, proves nothing in such a case; and if the matter is to be settled by words, the phrase *σωφρονεῖν*, used by St. Paul, taking the place of the *ταπεινοφροσύνη* of other passages, is the very word by which the Greek moralists constantly express that golden mean between a high and a low estimate of self, which Aristotle their spokesman lauds as the habitual tone of the perfectly virtuous man. So far indeed was the Hellenic mind from recognising no sin in pride, that it looked upon self-exaltation and ramping self-assertion in every form as not only a great sin, but the mother of all sins. This sin they designated by the significant term *ὑβρις*—a word which etymologically signifies *beyond the mark*, and which, if it had not already existed, might well have been coined by

Aristotle, had he been given, like Bentham, to the pedantry of making a language for himself.

“Est modus in rebus, sunt certi denique fines  
Quos ultra citraque nequit consistere rectum.”

Pride, indeed, is not only the sin by which Lucifer falls in Christian angelography, but it peoples Tartarus also in heathen legends; and the boastful Salmoneus, whose insane ambition aspires to mimic the thunder of Jove, is always the first to be blasted by the bolt. Wherein then shall we say lies the difference—for a difference there certainly is—between the humility of the Christian and the *σωφροσύνη* of the Greek? The common root of the virtue in both is plain; it is the contrast between mortal and immortal, which belongs equally to Polytheism and to Monotheism; pride was not made for man; let him worship one God or many gods, he is a poor weak creature at the best, and only the more called upon to practise a sober-minded humility because his winged schemes so often end in creeping deeds. The luxuriant pride of our young leafage grows up so frequently into a shrivelled blossom and a hollow fruit. Yet there is a difference. In Monotheism there is an impassable gulf betwixt God and man which exists not in Polytheism. There are steps which lead up with not a few gradations from Pericles to Zeus; the son of a Theban Semele may be raised into a god, and the son of a god, like Hercules, may indulge grandly in many of the stout carnalities of a mortal man. Here therefore lies the primary ground of the more profound humility of the Christian. But there is another, which in practice has proved even more potent,—the intense

feeling of the Christian already noted with regard to the exceeding sinfulness of sin. Every Christian looks upon sin habitually as a healthy man looks upon the plague; in some popular catechisms it is even laid down that "every sin, even the smallest, deserves God's wrath and curse both in this world and in that which is to come;" nay, more: certain theologians, deemed by some peculiarly orthodox, have taught that the whole world lies under a curse on account of the guilt of the great progenitor of the human race, in violating a special divine command, a guilt incurred some six thousand years ago, and transmitted in due course of generation to his hapless progeny. These dogmas, of course, are only strong caricatures of the great fact that every deed, whether good or evil, by the eternal constitution of things, necessarily transmits its influence from the earliest to the latest times; families and races therefore may lie for generations under a curse; the Greek tragedy acknowledges this in the strongest terms; but, as in the other cases that we have been considering, Christianity here not only intensifies a moral sentiment familiar to the heathen world, but it extends immensely the surface over which it is diffused. *Æschylus* and *Sophocles* could represent a heavy curse hanging for ages over the royal houses of *Pelops* and *Labdacus* as the consequence of monstrous sins committed by the founders of their families; but Christianity makes no selection in this matter, and flings the blackness of a moral blight in the most unqualified phrase over the whole race of Adam. So far as we are sinners we are all under a curse, all children of wrath; and no man is supposed to be so virtuous as that he cannot

honestly join in the humble response of the Litany, *Lord have mercy on us, miserable offenders!* These words repeated constantly in the weekly or daily service of a whole Church should alone be sufficient to prove how much more the virtue of humility is stamped, so to speak, into the Christian soul, than it was into the Hellenic. One cannot imagine either Socrates or Pericles using any such strong language. And I must confess, when coming out into the fresh air from the long Morning Service of the Anglican Church, I have often wondered how far the humble prostration of soul expressed in the refrain of the Litany had been cordially repeated by the great majority of the worshippers. The English, as is well known, are a peculiarly proud and often somewhat insolent people; and for myself, I honestly confess that I have always experienced in reference to my own feelings not a little exaggeration in the expressions of soul-prostration employed whether in the spoken Presbyterian or in the printed Episcopalian formularies. I do not see why Christian worshippers should so constantly avoid the language of a reasonable virtuous self-satisfaction used by King David in not a few places, and by Nehemiah. But however this be, and allowing that many Christians habitually employ phrases in their church service which are plainly at variance with the whole tone and temper of their lives, it is after all true that Christianity, if it errs here, errs on the safe side, and errs only as the medical men do, by using a very drastic drug to combat a very violent disease. For it is only too obvious that self-importance in various forms, not rarely under the decent mask of modesty and diffi-

dence, is the dominant vice of the human character. Young men are apt to glory in their strength, young women in their beauty, fathers are proud of their offspring, scholars of their learning, metaphysicians of their subtleties, and poets of the iridescent and evanescent bubbles of a luxurious fancy and an unpruned imagination. Men of science too are apt to be proud of their knowledge,—whether a knowledge of what is high or what is low matters not; it is the knowledge which puffs them up, not the thing known, which indeed, if well weighed, were oftener the motive to humiliation than to exaltation. We are therefore much in need of getting as much humility from the gospel as it is naturally calculated to inspire; and it may be observed that the public pulse is always ready to beat in unison with the sacred text whenever a man of great original genius stands forward, signally marked with the peculiarly Christian type of humility. Such a man was Michael Faraday, the subtle investigator of those secret laws which regulate the molecular action of particles of matter among themselves.

“ Yet living face to face with these great laws,  
Great truths, great mysteries, all who saw him near,  
Knew him how childlike, simple, free from flaws  
Of temper, full of love that casts out fear.

Untired in charity, of cheer serene,  
Careless of gold or breath of praise to earn;  
Childhood or manhood's ear content to win,  
And still as glad to teach as meek to learn.”<sup>1</sup>

Here we have the general type of a chaste and

<sup>1</sup> Lines on the death of Faraday.—*Punch*, September 7, 1867—a periodical which though sometimes unjust is never vicious, and always knows to appreciate real excellence.

beautiful Christian humility in the shape of a living man. To this no one objects. It is the dogmas and the doctrinal paradoxes of the professional theologians that are so apt to fret us ; to which, accordingly, here as in other cases, in judging of Christian ethics, we shall be wise in not attributing too much importance.

But it were a very great mistake to imagine that in reference to the estimate of personal worth Christianity exercises only a repressing, and as some may picture it, a depressing, influence. On the contrary, there is no religion has done so much in creating and fostering the feeling of personal worth and dignity. How is this ? Plainly because, while the Christian doctrine prostrates every man in a humble equality before God, that very equality makes every man conscious of an equal personality as compared with any other man. All men are sinners ; if that be a difficult doctrine to swallow there is one closely connected with it, which is more comfortable : all men are brethren ; and if brethren, equal—a wise father has no favouritism. This is another consequence of that monotheistic fatherhood of which we have already spoken ; it not only abolished nationalities, it created personalities. In the preaching of the gospel each individual is appealed to as a person with separate responsibilities ; he has sinned individually, he repents individually, he is redeemed individually. In this affair of Christian salvation there is nothing done by proxy. Priests are not known in the Church. The people only are the priesthood ;<sup>1</sup> each individual in the congregation has the value and the dignity of a

<sup>1</sup> βασιλειον ιεράτευμα.—1 Pet. ii. 9.

priest. From this equality of personal dignity before God two remarkable phenomena have flowed, both specially characteristic of modern society—the abolition of slavery and the rivalry of religious sects. Slavery, of course, must appear an intolerable anomaly to a man who believes that all men are brethren and all sons of God ; to call a man brother and to sell him as a chattel is a lie too gross to be tolerated even by a world accustomed to cheat itself with the authority of all sorts of mere names. And as to the rivalry of multifarious sects and churches, which some people bewail as the one great gangrene of Christendom, it is really somewhat shallow not to see that in the moral as in the physical world diversity of form only proves the richness and the variety of the vital manifestation. The external unity after which some religious persons sigh existed naturally under heathenism, where the individual conscience was merged in the State ; exists now also in Popish countries, where the same conscience is merged in the Priesthood ; but in the Christianity of the early Church, founded as it was on a direct appeal to the conscience of the individual sinner, such a purely external and mechanical idea could find no place. The right to exist at all as a Church established the right to dissent from other Churches, by asserting its own convictions when such assertion seemed necessary. This assertion, indeed, might often be made foolishly, forwardly—then it was a sin, the sin of schism ; but the right to dissent was inherent, it was part of the indefeasible birthright of spiritual liberty wherewith Christ had made his people free. In this sense, to talk of humility were to establish slavery ; while, on the other hand, to send



out branching suckers, which anon take independent root, is merely to prove the rich vitality of the stem. Christianity has thus become the great mother of moral individualism ; and the many sects, which are so apt to annoy us with their petty jealousies, are, when more closely viewed, merely a true index to the intensity of our spiritual life.

On the relation of Christian Ethics to civil AUTHORITY, on the one hand, and to the sacred right of LIBERTY on the other, much has been written, but most frequently by partisans too interested to be capable of an impartial judgment. The wisdom of the original preachers of the Gospel was in nothing more manifest than in the care with which they avoided mixing themselves up in any way with the social and political questions of the hour ; while at the same time they did not omit to enunciate principles and to exhibit conduct opposed equally to the servility which despotism demands and the licence in which democracy delights. It would be easy to marshal forth an array of texts by which the doctors of divine right on the one hand, and the preachers of the sacred right of insurrection on the other, have endeavoured to enlist the Saviour of mankind as a recruit in the internecine wars which they have waged. But however Churchman and Puritan might expound and denounce, the serene face of the Son of Mary looked always strange through the smoke and sulphur of such struggles ; his name was invoked on both sides with most vehement protestation ; but it was difficult all the while for the impartial spectator to perceive that he was part of the battle ; he seemed always to belong to both sides, or to neither. But sensible men of all parties

have at length become convinced that to attempt to stamp the name of Christ as the special patron of our little partisan cliques and warfares is as absurd as to expect that the sun should come down from heaven and confine his illumination to our private parlours. As for purely secular parties, it is quite certain that both the extremes which divide the political world are equally remote from the spirit of moderation and toleration which is the very atmosphere that Christian charity breathes. Absolute despotism, or the unlimited authority of one man over his fellows, is a condition of things which, as Aristotle remarks, could only be natural and legitimate in cases where the one absolute ruler happened to be both the strongest and the best man in the community ; but to acknowledge as absolute rulers those who have no authority for their rule but their own imperious will, and are always more likely to be the worst than the best members of the society to which they belong, is manifestly as directly opposed to the sense of righteousness in the Christian code of morals as to the dictate of reason in the Greek. On the other hand, the right of the mere numerical majority to rule, which is the characteristic principle of pure democracy, never can be admitted by a religion which teaches that the majority are bad, and that we ought not to follow a multitude to do evil. The equality which belongs to all Christians is not so much an equal right to rule as an equal duty to obey ; an equal right only to participate in those privileges and obligations which belong to an independent human being, not a mere chattel, as a member of a moral society called the Church, and of a legal society called the State. The Christian

rejoices indeed in his liberty ; but it is not in the liberty to do what he pleases, much less in the liberty of a majority to outbawl and to overbear a minority by the mere power of numbers. He is free from the pollution of sin, from the slavery of the senses, from the forms of a cumbrous ritualism, and the exactions of a lordly priesthood ; but he is not free, and never dreams of being free, from the homage which vice ought always to pay to virtue, from the natural subordination that ignorance owes to intelligence, and from the sacred authority of law. Here Christ and Socrates agree. "*Render unto Cæsar the things that are Cæsar's, and to God the things that are God's.*" "*Let every soul be subject to the higher powers.*" If laws are bad or impolitic, the guilt of their viciousness lies at the door of those who made them, or who gave themselves no concern to have them altered. But so long as they are laws let them be obeyed. The first duty of the Christian is obedience to all existing laws, respect for all established authorities, and a reverence generally for those gradations of dignity and excellence into which the fair proportions of the social architecture have been piled. Generally speaking he is not an eager politician ; the inspiration of large human love which possesses his breast renders him incapable of entering warmly into those party struggles in Church and State with which large human love has seldom much to do. He can neither despise the lowly majority of his fellow-men to please the oligarch, nor trample upon the intelligent minority to please the democrat. He has no great appetite for power ; he does not covet office ; he will not intrigue for place ; he will not grasp the sceptre of civic rule with a forward hand,

but wield it when it naturally falls to him with firmness as respects others, and with a holy jealousy as respects himself; and he will rejoice with trembling then chiefly when the victorious car of his party friends is riding over the prostrate army of his foes. Ambition is with him the love of usefulness, not the love of power; he comprehends the spirit which dictated the answer of a pious English clergyman when he refused the cure of a parish which was offered him, for the singular reason that "the emoluments were too large and the duty was too small;"<sup>1</sup> and he fears the dangers which may flow from the abuse of authority more than he desires the pleasures which are connected with its use.

Let us now, in the last place, inquire how the Christian law of right conduct has approved itself in the history of society since the first institution of the Church. And we seem certainly justified in starting here with the expectation that, moved by such a fervid steam-power, strengthened with such lofty sanctions, and displaying a scheme of virtues at once so manly and so gentle—virtues not preached merely in sermons or discussed in ethical treatises, but set forth in the living epistles of two such opposite and yet both eminently Christian types of character as St. Paul and St. John—so accoutred surely, and clad with the perfect panoply that belongs to a great moral warfare (Eph. vi. 13), Christianity could not but go forth conquering and to conquer, especially when the living faith in extraordinary, and miraculous demonstrations everywhere accompanied its march; and if it has in any considerable degree failed to fulfil its bright promise in regenerating the

<sup>1</sup> The Rev. J. W. Fletcher, Rector of Madeley, Shropshire.

face of the moral world, this, in those who accepted the religion, must have proceeded mainly from one of three causes : either because the ideal was too high for them, as we are accustomed to observe that certain nations are not socially far advanced enough for free constitutions, and thrive best under despotism ; or from the neglect of a regulative force which might check the natural tendency to excess, extravagance and one-sidedness, to which all human movements are liable ; or again, from the disturbance of the proper healthy action of the regenerative virtue of the doctrine by the admixture of certain foreign, incompatible, and corrupting elements. Of the first cause of failure nothing need be said ; it is with high morality as with high art, it is and it always must be above the average reach of the great mass of men ; and it may be that in morals, as in art, some nations have tacitly agreed to let the high standard drop, and content themselves with attaining a manifestly inferior but more generally attainable ideal. But however such compromises and refuges of despair may be the necessary wisdom of politicians and of lawyers, who have to deal practically with the selfish element in the masses of mankind, in the theory of morals, as of art, they can certainly find no place. The Church and the Academy must always set up the highest ideal ; if they fail to do so it is only because the inspiration which created them was originally feeble, or has waxed faint ; and if the members of the Church or the scholars of the Academy fail to realize in their lives and in their works the perfect pattern which has been set before them, it is the defect of the learner, not the fault of the teacher. No one thinks of elevating the character of art by lower-

ing the standard. And so if Christianity is too good for mankind it must just remain too good, till in the slow process of the ages men shall become more worthy of it. But the two other causes of failure require to be looked into more seriously. To the danger of excess Christian morality is peculiarly liable, just because its steam-power is so very strong and its action so efficacious. I read but the other day in a newspaper of a girl, studious, as girls are apt to be, of personal beauty, who, having picked up somewhere a fact well known to horse-dealers, that arsenic has a specific beneficial action on the skin, set to work of her own motion to mingle her daily potations with an infusion of the potent metal, and did this so assiduously that in a very short time, instead of improving her complexion, she had well-nigh removed herself for ever from the society of the living. Now this is exactly what has happened with Christian Ethics. Men have taken too much of a certain virtue, say Reverence—which is the virtue most closely bound up with religion—and have changed it into stupidity. That which was meant to elevate human beings out of their finite littleness has been used to depress them below the level of their meanest selves. And not only have Christians by the excessive culture of favourite virtues turned them into caricature, but they have assumed that because they have learned to be Christians they should forget to be men. There are certain human instincts, either purely physical, or closely connected with our animal existence, so strong that the first preachers of the evangelic ethics seem to have thought they might be safely left to take care of themselves; but these same instincts certain high-pressure Chris-

tians who came afterwards, with more zeal than sense, thought it their duty studiously to repress, or even violently to extirpate. The result has been that we have seen Christianity set at work systematically to maim that humanity which it was intended to heal. As to the third cause of failure, the admixture with foreign elements, it is of the same nature as the water which dilutes the milk and the sand which debases the sugar in the adulterated traffic of low traders. That such adulteration should exist to a large extent in Christianity was unavoidable, so soon as the profession of a religion so high above the measure of vulgar ethics became respectable. When everybody was born and baptized and bribed into Christianity, the morality which each Christian of this external type professed must have been something as cheap as the blood from which he was procreated, the water with which he was washed, and the work by which he gained his livelihood.

The first, and in its epiphany one of the earliest and most wide-spread excesses of Christian morality, was ASCETICISM. The temptation to this lies very near, in the practice of the Christian life, and is suggested in the strongest manner by its very language. If sin is the flesh, and some of its most shameless and rampant exhibitions are characteristically designated the lusts of the flesh, it would seem that the simplest way to get the mastery of such lusts is to keep the body under, as St. Paul has it,—to frown upon cakes and ale, and perhaps even to extirpate certain passions, as you would pull up dock by the long tape root, to make more room for the grass. Nor was this altogether an unreasonable procedure. It might be very admissible, in certain cases, to

become a eunuch for the kingdom of heaven's sake ; " for the present need " he who abstained from marriage might save himself from much incumbrance and from some misery. The error lay in setting up that as a general ideal which was valuable only as a device for special occasions, and possible only in a rational way to persons of a peculiar temperament. Our Saviour showed himself publicly at marriage-feasts as well as retired into the mountains ; he was found eating and drinking, and even changing water into wine. St. Paul also never denied that a glass of wine was a good thing ; but Christians afterwards very soon began to act as if the stern Baptist of the wilderness, and not the social Jesus of the waysides, had been the pattern set up for their imitation. This degeneration, no doubt, was the fruit of the anti-sensuous impulse which it had been necessary to give them ; and they saw daily in the streets of Rome and of Corinth unseemly spectacles enow, of which the lesson seemed to be : it is better to abstain than to be poisoned. Add to this that Plato and his Alexandrian successors had thrown the whole force of their ethics of reason on the spiritual side, and spoken of the body often in terms of greater contempt than the Christian apostles had ever done of the flesh. Of Plotinus, his biographer Porphyry tells that " he lived like a man who was ashamed of being in the body at all ; " and Clemens of Alexandria, one of the most intelligent of the Fathers, though not going to the extreme of these Platonic devotees, speaks of a good dinner in a style calculated to lead by a violent plunge on the other side into an artificial appetite for dry pease and hard crusts. " We must not," he says, " have any care of external things, but be



anxious rather to purify the eye of the soul and to chasten the flesh. Other animals live that they may eat ; man eats that he may live ; for neither is eating his business nor pleasure his good. Therefore those are strongly to be condemned who seek after Sicilian lampreys, Mæandrian eels, Pelorian mussels, oysters from Abydos, sprats from Lipara, Attic flounders, Mantinean turnips, Ascræan beetroot, thrushes from Daphne, and Chalcedonian raisins."<sup>1</sup> Of course the sensible old Father meant this partly as a protest against the monstrous gastronomic luxury of the Romans, of which we read in Suetonius and other Latin writers of that age ; but it seems no less true that he was carried away in these matters by an ideal of extravagant anti-sensualism, which had then strongly taken possession of the Christian Church, and was indeed a rank native growth of the East, specially of Syria and Egypt, as Church history largely testifies. Nay, even in modern times, and in Western Europe, where the cold climate partly excuses, partly necessitates, high feeding, we find young persons, in the first start of a religious life, not unfrequently led into a course of ascetic practice, as prejudicial to their bodies as the excessive book-work of the colleges is to the mind. Young Whitefield, we are told, suffered not a little from exercises of this kind ; and the prolonged formal fastings prescribed as God-pleasing by recent Ritualistic clergymen in this country, have on more than one occasion enfeebled for a whole lifetime the bodily functions of their virgin devotees. This is sad enough ; but it is not the worst. Such absurdities make Christianity ridiculous, and force revolted nature into the

<sup>1</sup> *Pædag.* ii. 1-3.

school of a benign Bentham or an easy Hume, where one may at all events be moral and reasonable. When we read in the biography of some modern Anglo-Catholic saint that he feared nothing so much as the soft seduction of a slice of buttered toast, and the golden deliciousness of a glass of Madeira, we begin to sigh for Aristotle ; it were better to have no religion at all as an inspiring soul of morality, than a religion which lends importance to such puerilities. But if these things have been done by certain pseudo-Christians, and are paraded even now, there was one belief, very common in the early ages of the Church, which tended not a little to intensify the tendencies which lead to them. At all times it is possible for the expectation of a future life to encroach on the enjoyment of the present ; and the growth of the asceticism of the first centuries was beyond doubt powerfully aided by the overwhelming influence of a newly promulgated and greedily accepted immortality, and yet more perhaps, by the belief in the speedy second coming of Christ. The renunciation of the world, and the more characteristic worldly enjoyments, becomes of course much more easy when the machinery of the world is shortly expected to stop. And thus the weakness of human nature concurred with a number of accidental causes to make the ascetic caricature of Christian ethics one of the most wide-spread diseases, and an altogether astounding phenomenon in the moral history of man. The ascetic oddities of Diogenes and a few Greek cynics were nothing to it. The multitude of strange, and ridiculous, and even disgusting forms which it assumed, will be found amply detailed in the second volume of Mr. Lecky's excellent *History*

of *European Morals*, and need not be enlarged on here.

One of the strangest fancies that was ever begotten by the translation of sense into nonsense is the idea of the Society of Friends, that Christianity forbids war, and that self-defence is a sin. Unquestionably Christianity forbids the spirit of hatred and the desire of revenge ; for the religion of Christ is a religion of motives, of purity of heart, and of humanity of purpose, and could not but forbid every spring of action that had in it the least tincture of selfishness ; but hostility between diverse interests is a fact which Christianity could not deny, and common sense would not attempt to explain away. What Christianity denounced was the spirit from which wars generally arise—“ *From whence come wars and fightings among you ? Come they not even from your lusts that war in your members ?*” And so far as this is the case, if these lusts were regulated by Christian principle—that is, if love and sympathy took the place of selfishness and jealousy, the wars that spring from their feverish ferment and fury would not take place. But this is a quite different thing from the natural right of self-defence ; there are wars where the aggression is all on one side, and where to yield to the assault would be to offer a bribe to brigandage ; there are wars also of pure stupidity, where both parties don't know what they are about, and where it is not a pure heart but a disciplined intellect that is necessary to prevent the fray. But whatever be the cause, wherever there is a fermenting bed of conflicting interests of divergent opinions and of antagonist passions, even amongst good men wars are unavoidable ; unless, indeed, such a court of impartial

arbiters could be appointed, as it has hitherto proved beyond the reach of human wit to realize ; and what Christian Ethics in this case requires is, that, contests of right being unavoidable, after every attempt at peaceful adjustment has failed, men should go to war with a certain mutual self-respect, and with a generous chivalry such as the knights of the middle ages systematically fostered, carrying on hostilities like men, and not like tigers. In this sense it has been proved perfectly possible to love our enemies without betraying our rights, and will become more and more practicable in the degree that international recognition becomes more common, and a large Christian philanthropy more diffused. But the idea that Christian love should become so intense as absolutely to annihilate the instinct of self-preservation, and to train every creature to love every other creature a great deal better than itself, is pure maundering, and will then only be tolerated among men when a decadent humanity shall have entirely divorced piety from reason, and Buddhism instead of Christianity shall have become the religion of the most advanced pioneers of civilisation.

But the most general excess which runs, so to speak, in the blood of Christian ethics, arises from the overflow of zeal without knowledge, at one time boiling over in floods of the most savage intolerance, at another ossified into the rigid features of the most unrelenting bigotry. This is an evil which springs naturally from the connexion of morality with religion ; and it is an evil of so enormous a magnitude that it seems in some sort to supply an excuse for those inadequate ethical systems of recent growth which take no cognisance of the reverential and de-

vout instincts of human nature, and, after the model of Aristotle, would build up an architecture of Ethics without piety. And if religious zeal generally is prone to run into intolerance, it is specially so in the case of monotheism. For monotheism is naturally intolerant; it will bear no assessor on the supreme throne; if true, it is exclusively true. And this is indeed no more than what it is entitled to; but it should be intolerant only of polytheism as a system, not uncharitable to polytheists as men; whereas it has become almost a proverb that the zeal of Christian theologians stands divorced not only from charity, but from truth; of all disputants men of the clerical profession are the most unfair, so much so, that among churchmen as a class candour is scarcely a mentionable virtue. A candid evangelist is generally a black sheep to his brethren; assuredly he will not be found prominent in Church debates, or forward as a leader of Church parties. But neither must we bear too hard upon the clergy in this matter. It is human nature, in fact, more than clerical inoculation that is to blame; and we shall find if we look round with an impartial eye, that humanitarian democrats, anti-church Radicals, scientific crotchet-mongers, mathematical formulists, and conceited young poets, are equally intolerant in their own way; only religion, like love, by the very intensity of its excellence, raises the natural intolerance of human nature to its highest power; it is so pleasant to stamp the name of God upon our passions and ride triumphantly over the world in the character of armed apostles of the most sacred truth. Hence religious wars, which, as all the world knows, have generally proved the most bitter and sanguinary; hence conquests, robberies,

and oppressions in the name of the God of Christians, which for systematic cruelty, treachery, and all manner of baseness, have not been surpassed in the annals of Spartan helotage or Venetian espionage ; hence assumptions of infallibility which make reason blush, and consecrations of absurdity which petrify common sense. And when this flaming zeal, in more quiet times, has settled down, it does not therefore always cease to exist, but stiffens into bigotry, and, united with that self-importance which is so natural to man, produces an exclusiveness and a Pharisaism of which all Christian Churches, in seeming rivalry of the Jews, whom they revile, have presented a very sharp and well-marked adumbration. If the religious Hindu will not eat from a Christian's platter, the religious Episcopalian will not dine in the same room or stand on the same platform with the religious Dissenter. The hissing fervour which originally forbade the approach of two adverse churches has now been changed into a dead wall or partition, which keeps those who ought to know, and love, and co-operate with one another, habitually as far apart as Greeks and Turks ; so that it has become the most difficult of all social operations to unite two Christian churches, separated perhaps by some notion more political than religious, in the prosecution of some common object which they both confess to be supremely desirable.

That which makes the ebullition and overflow of religious zeal so fatal in its effects, is not merely the excess of the zeal itself, which like all excess is bad, but the tendency of all religions to subordinate the moral element which they contain to the religious : to make religion a separate business instead of an ethical instrument ; to hang it as an amulet round

the neck, not to breathe it as an atmosphere of social health, to nurse it as a sacred fire in the heart, and to feel it as a power which purifies every passion, ennobles every motive, and braces the nerve to the robustness of all manly achievement. If there is one characteristic of Christianity more prominent than another, it is certainly this, that it is essentially an ethical religion; other religions favour certain virtues, or give a certain sanction to all virtues, but Christianity is morality; the moral regeneration is the religion. There are religions which profess to possess a power by which its priests can bring down rain, banish the pestilence, make the devil speak truth, and charm a murderer into heaven. Christianity knows nothing of these tricks. Its ministers supply no passports by which knaves and sluggards, when they escape from the body, may pass the celestial police without question. The Christian religion is not a special training which pious persons are to go through in order to prepare themselves for a future world; it calls upon every man with a loud voice to do the work of God in this world, here where alone work is possible for us; and not until our assigned task has been bravely done here, can there be any question of what promotion may await us there. Had the gospel been intended according to the vulgar prejudice now under consideration, as a religion having an existence apart from the details of everyday morality, John the Baptist certainly would never have been sent as its precursor, nor the Sermon on the Mount been given forth as its manifesto. Neither again does the famous doctrine of St. Paul, that men are saved by faith not by works, in any wise contradict the essentially ethical char-

acter of the faith which he preached. The works which in the Epistle to the Romans he so unconditionally denounces, are works either of self-conceit or of sacerdotal imposition, by which persons uninspired by a lofty moral ideal seek to recommend themselves to God. From such a germ no moral good can possibly grow; for as in the realm of speculation the oppressive sense of ignorance is the commencement of true knowledge, so in the practical world, the honest confession of sin is the commencement of sanctification. But how little Christian faith can have any significance apart from works, the same Apostle shows largely in the 11th chapter of the Epistle to the Hebrews, the only part of the New Testament by the way in which a formal definition of faith is given, and a chapter at the same time from whose copious historical illustrations, it is plain to any child that faith is merely a religious synonym for what we in secular language call moral heroism, a heroism peculiarly marked as Christian only by the distinct recognition on the part of the actor that the moral law which he obeys is the accredited will of the Moral Governor whom he serves. Clear as this is, however, there has always been manifested in the Christian church a tendency to separate faith from works, a tendency which, like other aberrations, has sometimes had the hardihood to stilt itself up into the dignity of a dogma, and in this attitude has been known in these latter times under the name of Antinomianism. Of a leaning towards this monstrous doctrine, the Calvinistic churches have been specially accused; and there can be no doubt, that in Scotland and other countries where a Calvinistic creed is professed, notions of this kind will always



find an open soil in souls of a certain nature, notions too that will often be practically acted upon even where they are not theoretically professed ; but it is historically certain, that of all Christian teachers the great Genevan reformer himself was the least chargeable with any absurdity of this kind. On the contrary, he found himself involved in a serious war with the city to which he ministered, just because he insisted that his religion should be practical, and his faith if it meant anything, should mean good works ; and he carried his point too in the end in spite of those who stoutly protested that the stern limitations of gospel law marked out by the preacher, should have nothing practically to do with the broad licence that might be convenient for the libertine and the publican. And indeed, it would be the greatest reform that could be made in the Christian church at the present moment, if our popular preachers were to give us fewer sermons, and when they did preach, take care, like St. Paul in his Epistles, to have some distinct practical point to speak to. For the difficulty of Christian as of all ethics, lies not in the general rules, but in the special application of the rules ; and vague condemnations of sin however severe, and commendations of holiness however fervid, will have little effect if people are not to be made to understand distinctly what those phrases so awfully sounded forth on Sunday are meant to signify on Monday. The dignity of the pulpit, I suspect, like the dignity of history, has often made it dull ; certain it is, that whether from a false sense of dignity, or from a religious zeal without ethical depth, or from ignorance of those affairs to which ethical maxims must be applied, or

from fear to offend those whose support is thought necessary, the ministrations of the Christian pulpit lose not a little of their efficiency from dealing more in the generalities of sin and holiness, than in special vices and virtues, and from yielding to the easy temptation of expatiating on scholastic subtleties or ecclesiastical crotchets, instead of unravelling the perplexities of social practice, or unmasking the disguises of individual character. Many things are left to be handled lightly by the novel-writer, which with much more effect might have been handled seriously in the pulpit; and in fact, I have found not a few excellent sermons in novels, which I should have sought for in vain in our pulpits; but the misfortune is, that people read novels mainly to be amused, and will see the living portrait of their own follies painted in the firmest lines, and with the most glowing colours, without making the slightest attempt to amend their faults. But of this enough. One thing is certain, that no amount of faith, no amount of preaching, and no amount of prayer, can be taken as a true measure of the genuine Christianity of any country, unless the faith professed shall be found to be permeating every form of social life, and elevating every trait of individual character. To any one who wishes to see what real Christianity can do for a district in the person of a truly evangelic and wise man, I recommend the perusal of the life of the Rev. John Frederick Oberlin, who, in the latter half of the last century, was, during the course of a long life, pastor of the mountain district of the Ban de la Roche in Alsace. This remarkable man was not content with the common ministerial routine of preaching and praying; he saw that in the cir-

cumstances in which he was placed, nothing was to be done by mere talk ; so with pick-axe in hand he set himself to make roads ; he became the forester of his parishioners, and planted trees ; their school-master, and built them schools ; their architect, and reformed their cottages ; their deacon, and taught them trades ; their professor, and lectured to them on science ; their physician, and taught them to live according to the laws of health. Thus the faith which he professed turned a neglected parish in a few years into a perfect museum of all good works, of which a religion of the purest love was the soul ; and the unobtrusive Christian worker, who of this wilderness made a garden, was perhaps the greatest man in France at a time when the thunders of Napoleon were shaking the world from west to east, while his own fame had scarcely travelled beyond the bleatings of the sheep of his own parish. So little has the noisy applause of the world to do with some of the highest forms of Christian virtue.<sup>1</sup>

It remains now only shortly to indicate how Christian ethics has suffered from the admixture of adulterating elements. These are notably three : INTELLECTUALISM, RITUALISM, and SECULARISM. "There is a strange fascination," says a living distinguished theologian, "in reasoning about mysteries."<sup>2</sup> Every religion of course has its mysteries—for a man reverences that only which he has reason to respect,

<sup>1</sup> It is to be observed, however, that the friends of agricultural improvement in Strasburg used their interest to get the merits of their pastor known in Paris ; and the consequence was that he was rewarded with a gold medal after having worked fifty-one years in the unnoticed useful obscurity of his parish. Altogether his golden pastorate lasted for the long space of fifty-nine years.

<sup>2</sup> Westcott, *Gospel of the Resurrection* (1867), p. 96.

while he cannot fully comprehend it ; but the faculty of reverence when exercised on sacred mysteries should rather deter men from presumptuous dogmatism than invite them to its exhibition. But it has not always proved so in the Church. The unsophisticated intellect of the laity might possibly have been content without the vain attempt to define what is in its nature undefinable. It is not the business of man to define God at all ; our finite work in reference to all forms of the Infinite is to acknowledge, to worship, and to obey. But the meddling intellect of professional theologians would not allow matters to rest here ; they proceeded to construct certain curious formulæ of doctrinal orthodoxy, an intellectual belief in which was substituted for the living ethical faith by which the heathen world had been regenerated. Men were now taught to entertain the thoroughly unchristian idea that the acceptance by the cognitive faculty of an array of nicely-worded propositions concerning the Divine Nature and the plan of redemption was somehow or other essential to their salvation ; was certainly not the least important element in Christian faith, and the non-acceptance of which was held as justly excluding the recusant from the communion of the saints. This was a sad mistake. The fiery denunciations which St. Peter (2 Pet. ii. 1) and the other apostles uttered against those who "privily bring in damnable heresies," were launched not against intellectual heterodoxies, but against the lusts of the flesh and all sorts of sensualism ; but now the hated name of heresy was transferred to the imaginary sin of not being able to believe what a conclave of foolish or presumptuous Churchmen chose to lay down, and artificial creeds

were forged and fulminated, and flung with stern anathemas and boastful defiance against every honest thinker who could not be brought to believe that faith must show its efficacy principally by its power of blinding reason and smothering common sense. This gigantic dogmatism of the shallow understanding making an alliance with the fervid religious zeal which has been already mentioned, led consistently to a system of the most organized social selfishness that the history of the world knows,—selfishness only the more horrible that it was dignified by the most venerable names, and consecrated by the most sacred ceremonial. The office-bearers of the originally free moral community called the Church now declared themselves infallible, and lorded it insolently over the consciences of those within the Church, and over both soul and body of those without its pale. To think on any of the subjects most interesting to a thinking man was now a sin; men who had the misfortune not to think exactly according to the formulæ prescribed by the Church were prosecuted as criminals, condemned as malefactors, burnt at the stake as monsters, and refused the humanities of common burial. A compact was made with the civil power that no situation of honour, emolument, or trust should be given to any one who was not ready to swear to the established orthodoxy; and thus, as human nature is constituted, not only was thinking forbidden and absurdity enthroned, but a bribe was held out to public hypocrisy; the conscience of young persons was systematically debauched; and the love of truth and the independent searching of the Christian Scriptures in many Christian churches became utterly unknown. Such were the fruits of Intellectualism.

But these portentous results were not produced by the impertinence of the meddling intellect alone. Such a hideous domination over the liberties of the individual conscience could not have been achieved by one unassisted evil power. During the same period of Christian corruption the other evil influences of RITUALISM and Secularism were both equally active. Of these the first, though with a distinctively religious feature, was in essential character anti-Christian. Christianity is a religion of inward motives, Ritualism a religion of outward forms. It was not enough that the hand should shrink from offending; that the eye should cease from lustful wandering; the fountains of evil desire had to be stopped in their first wellings; the lawyer and the police might concern themselves with the completed act and its consequences; with the evil thought, which is the germ of all evil deeds, Christianity commenced and finished its purifying action. Occupied with this radical regeneration, the preachers of the Gospel never dreamt of prescribing minute regulations about attitudes, gestures and postures, crosses, crosiers, candlesticks and change of dresses, decorations with banners, flags, festoons, gilded shrines, jewelled images, and other appurtenances of flaunting ceremonial. These might be matters of decency and taste very proper to be attended to; but to have made them the subject of special prescription would have been to assign them an importance which they did not deserve; nay, would have manifestly run counter to the liberty of that religion which they taught, and confounded it with the bondage of that Judaism—a bondage of meats and drinks, new-moons and sabbaths, and other externalities—which neither

they nor their fathers had been able to bear. And this leads us to remark, that the oppressive puerilities of Ritualism in themselves, perhaps more ridiculous than pernicious, were, in the case of the Jews, and are indeed naturally everywhere, closely combined with another evil no less foreign to the genius of Christianity, which we may call SACERDOTALISM. The Jews and the Egyptians had a closely banded hereditary priesthood culminating in a theocracy; the Greeks and Romans had a sporadic priesthood of special sacred persons, colleges and places; of these a ritual, often cumbrous, seldom graceful, sometimes shameful, generally ridiculous, was the legitimate exponent. Christianity with the performance abolished the performers; prayers were declared to be the only incense, a holy life the only offering, and a people zealous of good works the only priesthood. But this was too good a doctrine for poor human nature to hold by, or at least for the then stage of civilisation permanently to maintain. People were only too glad to get theologians to think for them, and ceremonies to dress up their devout feelings in an imposing though it might be often a tasteless garb. These ceremonies, originally indifferent, by the sacred character belonging to the men by whom they were performed, soon became sacrosanct, and the performing priest naturally attributed a special efficacy to those rites of which he was the instrument. Whatever virtue they possessed was derived originally, no doubt, like everything else, from God, but specially and exclusively through him. He was the conducting rod, the chosen medium of bringing down the spiritual electricity from heaven to earth. Thus he became a wonder-worker more potent than the rain-

makers of African superstition. He had but to open his mouth and wine became blood, and bread flesh at the magic mutter of his lips. In a religion thus made essentially sacerdotal, where thaumaturgic rites received such prominence, it was impossible that the ethics of common life should be able to maintain their original place in the idea of its founder. Judaism, in fact, and Heathenism, had been smuggled back into the Church; religion was one thing, moral character another; brigands might rob and kill, and, at the same time, keep up a converse with Heaven by the kissing of crosses, the telling of beads, and the tramping of pilgrimages; the poles of right and wrong might be positively inverted, while piety remained. But a still greater triumph for the evil principle was in store. In the evangelic history of the Temptation, it is narrated that the devil, after trying other methods of seduction, carried our Lord up into an exceeding high mountain, where there was a survey of all the kingdoms of the world and the glory thereof, and pointing out these the tempter said,—“*All this I will give thee, if thou wilt fall down and worship me.*” This argument, as we know, did not succeed with our Lord; but it succeeded only too well with those who came after Him. The marriage of worldly power and glory, to an essentially spiritual and unworldly religion, gave birth to that last and most potent adulteration which we have called SECULARISM. There is no necessity, of course, that a modern bishop should be a poor man, any more than an ancient patriarch; Christian ethics do not forbid a man to have a fat purse any more than a full stomach; but as a Christian may not live an epicure mainly for the sake of his stomach, so neither



may he live for the sake of his purse. And then there is a great difference between the effect of worldly prosperity in individuals and in institutions. An individual may be a man of exceptional virtue, and in the face of many temptations may become more virtuous the more he is exposed; but institutions are composed of the majority, and οἱ πολλοὶ κακοί, the majority are not heroes. It was natural, therefore, to expect, that as the Christian Church in its first epoch possessed a principal element of purity in the poverty and the social insignificance of its members, so one great occasion of its corruption would emerge as soon as the profession of the once despised faith became the high-road to wealth, the badge of social worth, and the guarantee of political power, whether, "as at Constantinople, the attempt was made to imperialize the Church, or, as at Rome, the Church waxed into the dimensions of an empire."<sup>1</sup> But it was not at Rome or Constantinople only that the Church was thus secularized. Wherever official position in a prosperous and popular church presents an open career to persons desirous of making a respectable livelihood, there must always be a class of people, more or less numerous, who are ready to say in their hearts, though they may not dare everywhere to say it openly,—"*Put me, I pray thee, into one of the priests' offices, that I may eat a bit of bread.*" Only the means by which this bit of bread may be obtained depends always to a great extent on the character of the patrons; and the corruption of the church office-bearers will always be greater where the appointment to valuable benefices is a mere civil right,

<sup>1</sup> Westcott, *Gospel of the Resurrection*, p. 98.

belonging to private individuals, than where it remains with its original depositaries, the congregations of the Christian people. No doubt where popular election exists in a church there will always be a danger of divisions, and a sort of ecclesiastical demagoguery or mean subserviency to the passions and prejudices of the majority can scarcely be avoided ; but this is a less evil than open simony, and the usurpation of apostolic functions by men who do not, like St. Paul, work with their own hands that they may preach without fear, but preach that they may feed themselves, and dress themselves, and amuse themselves, and bring up their sons to play billiards, and their daughters to dance quadrilles with the aristocracy of the land. This thorough secularisation of religion is one of the most revolting spectacles that the moral history of the world presents ; and to its existence in any country, along with the other two adulterations mentioned, must be attributed its full share of guilt in creating that reaction in favour of a morality without religion, and a State divorced from Church, which is one of the favourite ideas of the democratic age in which we live. For while Intellectualism and Ritualism expose an ethical religion to attack, the one by planting faith in an attitude of hostility to reason, the other, by making its worship puerile and ridiculous, the secular corruption cuts deeper and proves suicidal to the very essence and soul of Christianity. For by this infection a religion of the most chivalrous love, the purest unselfishness, and the profoundest humility, is worked up into a monstrous combination of selfishness, pride, and hypocrisy, which tears up the very notion of public virtue by

the roots ; and so in point of fact it came to pass that, in the lives of some of the most conspicuous of Christian pontiffs, there was exhibited to the world a march of scarlet sins, unsurpassed by the bestialities of Roman or the ferocities of Byzantine autocrats. In the holiest courts of the most holy all was rankness, loathsomeness, putrescence ; only a theatric show of sanctitude was kept up scarcely with decency, to deceive those who might be deceived by the good fortune of not living too near the actors. And thus was realized the most sorrowful example of the truth of the ancient adage—*corruptio optimi pessima* ; THE CORRUPTION OF THE BEST THINGS IS THE WORST.

## UTILITARIANISM.

OF recent British phenomena in the domain of ethical philosophy, what is called Utilitarianism is the most notable, certainly the most noisy. If, indeed, there is anything distinctive in the most recent tone of philosophic thought and sentiment in this country, apart from speculations springing out of pure physical science, it is this very thing, or something that claims close kindred with it. It is talked of in the streets and commented on in the closet ; and numbering, as it does, amongst its advocates some of the most astute intellects of the age, it certainly deserves an attentive examination. No doubt its merits, whatever they be, are likely to fall short of its pretensions ; for never was a system ushered in with a greater flourish of trumpets and a more stirring consciousness on the part of its promulgators that a new gospel was being preached which was to save the world at last from centuries of hereditary mistake. At the watchword of the system, shot from Edinburgh to Westminster more than a hundred years ago, the son of a London attorney felt "the scales fall from his eyes ;" all was now clear that had hitherto been dim ; a distinct test was revealed for marking out by a sharp line a domain where, previous to the arrival of the great discriminator, all

had been mere floating clouds, shifting mists, and aërial hallucinations; the unsubstantial idealism of Plato and the unreasonable asceticism of the New Testament were destined at length to disappear; only let schools be established for the creation of universal intelligence to assert itself by universal suffrage, and the redemption of the world from imaginary morality and superstitious sentiment would be complete. This, so far as my observation has gone, is the sort of tone under the inspiration of which the doctrine of Utility has been proclaimed to the world; and that I am not exaggerating but rather understating the self-gratulation of the school, is evident from the fact that Dr. Southwood Smith, one of Bentham's most admiring disciples, actually believed and printed that his discovery of the principle of utility marked an era in moral philosophy as important as that achieved for physical science by Sir Isaac Newton's discovery of the principle of gravitation. Nor was Dr. Smith at all singular in this tone of transcendental laudation. The dogmatism which, as we shall see, was a characteristic feature in the intellectual character of Bentham, was inherited more or less by most of his disciples; and the importance which they attribute to themselves and their own discoveries is only surpassed by the superciliousness with which they ignore whatever has been done by their predecessors. This ignoring of the past, indeed, to the best of my judgment, seems to be the radical defect, not only of the Benthamites, but of the great body of our British philosophers from Locke downwards; we do not start from a large and impartial survey of the inherited results of thought, so much as from some point of local or

sectional prominence; our petty systems are of the nature of a reaction rather than an architecture, and like all reactions are one-sided in their direction and extravagant in their estimate of their own importance. If scholars sometimes make their learning useless by their ignorance of the present, the men of the present are not less apt to make their intellectual position ridiculous by ignoring, misunderstanding, or misrepresenting their relation to the past;—for a large appreciation of what has been achieved by our predecessors alone can guarantee a just estimate of the true value of our own labours. All judgments are comparative; and as Primrose Hill is a mighty mountain to the boy born within the chime of the Bow Bells, so Locke and Hume and Bentham may be taken for the greatest captains of thinking by men to whom Socrates, Plato, and Aristotle are unknown.

The first thing that strikes us in attempting a critical estimate of Utilitarianism is its name. Names are sometimes attached to systems accidentally, and in that case need not be curiously analysed; but when they are deliberately chosen by the propounder of a new theory, they are significant, and provoke question. “WHY UTILITY PLEASES” is the heading of one of Hume’s chapters; and the answer to it simply is, that as Utility consists in the adaptation of means to ends, and as the recognition of such adaptation is a peculiar function of reason, it cannot but be that reasonable creatures should receive pleasure from being affected in a manner so suitable to their nature. The eyes, as Plotinus says, are susceptible of pleasure from light, because an impressibility to light is of the essence of their quality and

the idea of their structure ;<sup>1</sup> so reason is necessarily pleased with what is reasonable, and utility must please a creature whose whole energy, when he acts according to his best nature, is expended in discovering and applying means which shall be useful to secure certain ends. But the answering of this question does not advance us one step in moral philosophy ; moral philosophy is a science of ends, not of means—a science of what Aristotle calls the *ἀρχιτεκτονικόν*, or supreme *τέλος*—the ultimate aim. So our new philosophy has taken as a watchword a term that means nothing by itself, any more than the terms *plus* and *minus* in algebra. To give the term a meaning, the further question must be put, *Useful for what?* and then the old commonplace comes out—Useful for what all men desire, Happiness, of course ; for “all men desire Happiness, that’s past doubt,” says Locke,<sup>2</sup> and Aristotle also, for that matter ; but we do not consult philosophers to hear such truisms. What then comes next ? The truism is put into an antithetic shape, and we are told as the grand result of the profoundest modern thought that *the greatest happiness of the greatest number* is the ultimate principle of moral science, the pole-star of all social navigation, by attention to which alone the blinding mists of transcendental sentiment and the sharp ledges of unnatural asceticism can be avoided. But is this maxim really in any way worthy of the applause with which it has been received ? May we not well ask, in the first place, *Who ever*

<sup>1</sup> οὐ γὰρ ἂν πώποτε εἶδεν ὀφθαλμός ἥλιον ἡλιοειδῆς μὴ γεγενημένος, οὐδὲ τὸ καλὸν ἂν ἴδαι ψυχὴ μὴ καλῇ γενομένη.—PLOTINUS, i. 9 ; Kirchhoff:

<sup>2</sup> Locke, ii. 21, 68.

*doubted it?* If happiness is desirable, and if man is naturally a social and sympathetic animal, as all the ancients took for granted, then the more that can be made to partake of it so much the better. Of this neither Aristotle nor Plato ever had any doubt. They wished every country to contain as large a population as was compatible with the conditions of health; beyond these limits, indeed, they saw a difficulty, and, to prevent the evil of overpopulation, were willing to allow certain remedies which, to modern sentiment, may appear harsh and inhuman; but they never doubted that in a well-ordered State happiness was the common right of the many, not the special privilege of the few; and Aristotle in his *Politics* lays it down expressly as a reason why oligarchy is to be reckoned among the worst forms of government, that it assumes that power is to be used for the interest of the few, not for the good of the many. The famous Benthamite formula, therefore, can be regarded only as a very appropriate war-cry for an oppressed democracy fighting against an insolent oligarchy; to this praise it is justly entitled, and in this sphere it has no doubt been extensively useful; but as a maxim pretending to enunciate a fundamental principle of ethical philosophy it has neither novelty nor pertinence.

The Utilitarian school, therefore, judged by its name, and by its favourite shibboleth, has no distinctive character; and its chosen appellation merely shows an utter deficiency of the first principles of a scientific nomenclature. To say that morality consists in happiness, falls logically under the same category with the proposition that a cat is an animal





### UTILITARIANISM.

—we knew that ; but what we wish to know is, by what differentiating marks a cat is distinguished from other animals, and specially from others of the feline family. Wherein does the special happiness of the creature called Man consist ? Aristotle, to my thinking, answered that question with as much precision as it ever can be answered, and neither Hume nor Bentham added anything to his definition. So far as these spokesmen of modern ethics said that virtue consisted in acting according to reason, as necessarily involving the greatest happiness of the reasonable being called Man, they said what was quite true, but nothing that was new ; they merely repeated the Stagirite, putting the element of *εὐδαιμονία* into the van, which he had wisely kept in the rear. So far as they went beyond this, they said what was neither new nor true, but only a refurbishment of the old doctrine of Epicurus, that for man, as for beast, pleasure is the only good, and there is no need of a distinctive phraseology for the happiness of creatures so essentially the same. What then is the distinctive character of Utilitarianism, if we fail to discover it in its name ? for that the school, as a matter of fact, does stand on a very distinct basis, and in an attitude of very decided antagonism to other systems, is unquestioned. Between Paley, the model churchman of the eighteenth century, and Bentham, the stereotyped hater of all churchmen, churches, and creeds, there is no doubt a great gap ; still there is a strong family likeness even between these two extremes of the school ; and the point in which this likeness asserts itself we think may be best expressed by the phrase EXTERNALISM. From Thomas Hobbes of Malmesbury

down to Alexander Bain of Aberdeen, the morality of the Utilitarians is a morality in which the moral virtue of the inner soul is as much as possible denied, and the moral virtue of outward institutional or other machinery as much as possible asserted. Look everywhere for the origin of right and wrong—only not in the soul. The kingdom of heaven, according to the prophets of this gospel, is not within you, but without. This, if I am not mistaken, is the keynote which gives a unity and a significance to all the variations of Utilitarianism from Bentham to Bain. Let us hear it in their own words: "What one expects to find in an ethical principle is something that points out some *external* consideration as a means of warranting and guiding the internal sentiments of approbation and disapprobation:" so Bentham. "Conscience is moulded on *external* authority as its type." "Utility sets up an *outward* standard in the room of an inward, being the substitution of a regard to *consequences* for a mere *unreasoning sentiment* or feeling:" so Bain. "The contest between the morality which appeals to an *external* standard and that which grounds itself on *internal* conviction, is the contest of progressive morality against stationary; of reason and argument against the deification of mere opinion and habit:" so Mill. The assumptions implied in these last sentences, no less than the proposition stated, are peculiarly interesting. They are redolent of all that narrowness, exclusiveness, and dogmatism, which we have already noticed as so characteristic of Bentham. It is assumed that the advocates of an innate morality hold it to be a thing that acts apart from, or contrary to reason. It is assumed that moral progress is possible only

under the action of an ethical system founded on the doctrine of consequences, whereas experience has proved that a morality of motives, such as Christianity contains, is as much capable of expansion and of new applications as any other morality. It is assumed that all our sentiments and feelings, that is, the whole emotional part of our nature, is to be supposed false, till its right to exist and to energize shall have been approved by reason. But what if emotions be primary sources of all moral life, which reason indeed may examine, but which it has no more authority to disown than it has power to create? What if the emotions and the sentiments, which you treat with such disrespect, really supply the steam without which your curious ratiocinative machinery were utterly worthless? But these questions anticipate part of our coming argument. Meanwhile let EXTERNALISM stand here as the only significant designation for the system of ethics which we are now to examine; and let the word UTILITY be remitted to that limbo of vagueness and confusion whence it originally came forth.

It will be most convenient to treat this subject historically, because this method will display in the clearest light the operation of that one-sided reaction out of which the Lockian philosophy, no less than the Benthamite Ethics took its rise. And here it will be manifest that we cannot altogether escape metaphysics, however odious that word may sound to the general English ear; for in our inquiry we must find or assert certain first principles which form the foundation of all reason, whether practical or speculative; and though metaphysics, like clouds, are apt to be misty, they are just as certainly the

fountain of all moral science, as the clouds are the fathers of the rain, which supplies the water that moves the useful machinery of the mill. We must therefore start from Mr. Locke, the acknowledged father of whatever school of British thinking deserves the name of a philosophy. No doubt before him came Hobbes; but this man stands alone, like a huge trap-rock bolt up in a flat country; and therefore we shall let him lie over for a separate treatment, if opportunity should occur; but in tracing up the main line of Utilitarian Ethics from Mill to Hartley, I found that they ended naturally and legitimately in Locke, just as a net-work of waters may often be traced to one common well-head. Now Locke is the father of what the Germans call the empirical philosophy. What does this mean? It simply means, as any one may see by a superficial glance cast on the first chapter of the "Essay on the Human Understanding," that he commenced his philosophy by a formal declaration of war against the doctrine of INNATE IDEAS inherited by modern thinkers from the Platonists of Athens, Alexandria, and Florence; and, if all innate sources of true knowledge are denied, then there remains for morality, as for everything else, only the source of external experience, which comes to us not by nature but by acquisition; for according to the use of the English language, whatever things a man does not originally possess, he acquires. Locke, therefore, in the language of Plato and Aristotle, denied the existence of *ἐπιστήμη*, or science properly so called, which is founded on necessary principles of internal reason, and asserted that all knowledge is to be got by *ἐμπειρία* or experience, in other words, is what the

Germans call empirical. That Locke's ideas on this fundamental question of all speculation were anything but clear we shall see immediately; but on the face of the matter the very noticeable thing is, that in rejecting the doctrine of innate ideas the Englishman does not go directly to Plato and Plotinus, the sources from which this doctrine had come, but he goes to war with certain floating loose notions of Herbert and other dreamy speculators of his own or the previous generation. Now, this is evidently a method of proceeding altogether unphilosophical. If a man means to refute Christianity scientifically, he does not go to the books of the Jesuits, but to the New Testament. So the refutation of the doctrine of innate ideas should have commenced with the examination of Plato, its original promulgator. But it was Locke's destiny to fight against Plato as Bacon fought against Aristotle, without knowing his adversary. The consequence was in both cases the same; a real battle against a real adversary, and a real victory on the one side against a real defeat on the other; but not the victory and not the adversary supposed. The world, however, always willing to be deceived by names, gave the combatants credit for having done a much greater thing than they had really achieved; it was not the mock image of Æneas, but the real Æneas that Diomede had routed in the fight. And so it came to be an accepted fact in this country with large classes of persons that Locke had driven Plato out of the field, just as Bacon had quashed Aristotle. And the deception in the case of Locke has lasted longer; and that for a very obvious reason. The physical science movement

inaugurated by Bacon led much more naturally to a recognition of the true Aristotle than to a recovery of the genuine Plato. It suited the practical genius of John Bull to regard the severe Idealist as a transcendental dreamer; and Mr. Locke taught him to put this shallow prejudice into dignified and grave language. A thinker who does such a service to any nation is pretty sure to be overrated; and so it fared with Mr. Locke, who besides being a thinker was a sensible man, and on public affairs held liberal opinions in harmony with the progressive element of the age. Accordingly a recent juridical writer of the Utilitarian school has not scrupled to call him in the most unqualified terms, "the greatest and best of philosophers."<sup>1</sup> With this partial verdict, however, we do not find that foreign writers agree; and the following estimate of the merits of our typical English Philosopher by a recent German writer, is unquestionably nearer the truth. "Precision and clearness, perspicacity and distinctness, are the characteristic of Locke's writings. Acute rather than deep in thinking, he is true to the character of his nationality."<sup>2</sup> So much for the position of our great English "empiric." Let us now look more nicely at his doctrine, and the reasons of it.

The philosophy against which Locke argues is, that there exist "certain innate principles, primary notions, *κοινὰ ἔννοιαι*, characters, as it were, stamped on the mind, which the soul receives in its very first being, and brings into the world with it"—(i. 2.) And the assertion of the belief in these innate ideas, he afterwards indicates to have approved itself "a

<sup>1</sup> Austin.

<sup>2</sup> Schwegler, *Geschichte der Philosophie*. Translated by Stirling.

short and easy way for lazy people, and of no small advantage for those who affect to be masters and teachers. Nor is it a small power it gives one man over another to have the authority to be the dictator of principles, and teacher of unquestionable truth, and to make men swallow that for an innate principle which may serve his purpose who teacheth them"—(i. 4. 24.) From these words it is plain that Locke protested against the doctrine of innate ideas, in the same spirit, and with the same object, that Luther did against the doctrine of the infallibility of the Pope; his mission, he considered, was to rouse reason from its lethargy, and to teach men to think with open eyes, not blindly to believe; and, in so far as he meant this, the mission of the philosophical, as of the religious reformer, was unquestionably right. But, as above remarked, in making this protest, he was fighting against the language of Plato without knowing, or, so far as we can see, ever attempting to know the ideas of Plato. This will be more manifest from the arguments which he uses. "If there be such innate principles," says he, "it is strange that children and idiots have no apprehension of them; children do not join general abstract speculations with their sucking bottles and rattles"—(i. 2.) "If we attentively consider young children, we shall have little reason to think that they bring many ideas into the world with them"—(i. 4. 2.) These are Mr. Locke's words, and they certainly indicate a conception of the doctrine of innate ideas the most crass and crude that could well be conceived. Assuredly neither the Athenian, nor the Alexandrian, nor the Florentine Platonists, ever dreamt of anything so absurd. Surely Plato knew that children

did not march into the world with Euclid's axioms in their mouth, nor did he believe that even a miraculous baby, like himself, came out of his mother's womb armed cap-à-pie with all the principles of the ideal philosophy, like Pallas Athena out of the head of Jove. What Plato actually said was, that everything was what it grew to be by virtue of a divine type, which lay in the germ, and which type was the expression of an energizing thought in the Divine mind; and this type, form, or idea (*εἶδος*), he called innate, because it was possessed originally as part of the internal constitution of the thing, not acquired from without. Who the men were who in Locke's day or before him, maintained the existence of ready-made, panoplied, and full-grown ideas in the minds of idiots and babies, I do not know; but, so far as the Platonists were concerned, the Englishman was fighting with a shadow. Idiots, in any case, as imperfect and abnormal specimens of their kind, have nothing to do with the argument; and as to children, the things that sleep within them cannot, in the nature of things, be known till they grow up into full leafage and burst in perfect blossom. Inborn ideas are not the less inborn because they do not exist full-grown at the moment of birth. They did exist for ever in the original self-existent Divine mind; they do exist in the derived existence of the human mind the moment it awakens into consciousness of its individualism. In either case they are not acquired; they are possessed. Plato's doctrine, therefore, was, that the germ of all human ideas lies in the human mind, and is developed from within, not derived from anything external. In this there cannot be the slightest doubt that he spoke wisely;



as little that Mr. Locke wrote most unwisely, when, in accounting for the origin of our ideas, he said, "the senses at first let in particular ideas and furnish *the empty cabinet*." Here we fall in with one of Mr. Locke's short similes, which have proved more effective in spreading his doctrine than his diffuse and somewhat wearisome chapters. "One of the most common forms of fallacious reasoning," says Mr. Mill, "is that of arguing from a metaphysical expression as if it were literal."<sup>1</sup> This is precisely the error which seems to have run away with the wits of the sensation-philosophers, when they read Mr. Locke's chapter on the Origin of Ideas. The mind was "an empty cabinet,"—if empty, it had merely a holding or containing power, before it was filled and furnished altogether and absolutely from without. But a single word will show the inadequacy and the utter falsity of this style of talking. The senses (as Plato long ago showed in the *Theætetus*) let in no *ideas*, they let in *impressions*, which the plastic power of mind elaborates into ideas; and again, the mind is in nowise like an empty cabinet, in which the senses hang up ready-painted pictures; but the mind, in so far as it creates ideas, and not merely experiences sensations, both paints the pictures and hangs them up, and this it does by an inherent divine power and divine right, of which no mere sensation can give any account. In fact there is nothing more hopeless than an attempt to explain the genesis of ideas, connected as it is with the miraculous fact of consciousness, by any sensuous process. It were much nearer the truth to adopt the strong language of a distinguished Scotch metaphysician, and say that

<sup>1</sup> *Logic*, chap. iii.

"man becomes an I or a conscious being, not in consequence of or even on occasion of his sensations, but actually in spite of them."<sup>1</sup> The real fact of the matter is, as any one may observe in the reasonings of young persons, that in the formation of ideas the mind is active, not passive; and this distinction is strongly expressed in the very structure of some languages, in which verbs, expressive of mere sensation, such as verbs of smelling, are followed by the case which belongs to the passive voice, whereas verbs which express both a sensation and an intellectual idea, imposed on the sensuous expression by the plastic mind, demand the case which belongs to the presence of an active and transitive force. The healthy instincts of the human race manifested in the common uses of language, are often more to be trusted in such matters than the subtleties of metaphysicians. Nature, at least, which the popular instinct follows, is always complete; speculation is apt to be one-sided. If we will have a simile that may express both sides of the wonderful fact of knowledge, we may say sensation supplies the materials, but the manufacturer of ideas is MIND.

I said above that Mr. Locke was a sensible man; and it is nothing contrary to this to admit that by the incautious use of one or two strong similes—"the empty cabinet, the sheet of blank paper, and the dark room,"—he became the originator of a school which made itself famous by the ingenious maintenance of the nonsense that judgment and sensation are the same thing. A vain Frenchman, pleased to utter glittering paradoxes in gay saloons, might say this, might even go so far as to parade the proposi-

<sup>1</sup> Ferrier on Consciousness; Posthumous Works, vol. i. p. 255.

tion that if horses had only possessed human hands they would have been men, and if men had been armed with equine hoofs they would have been horses; such paradoxes were, no doubt, a logical deduction from the doctrine that sensation is the father of ideas, and that all internal faculties are the result of mere external forces; but Mr. Locke was too much of a solid and sober Englishman to allow himself to be led into sheer nonsense by the charm of mere logical consistency, and chose rather to prove his good sense by his inconsistency. After asserting in the strongest terms that the only origin of ideas is sensation, he goes on to divide ideas into ideas of sensation and ideas of reflection, which division instantly suggests the question—*What is reflection, and whence comes the reflecting power?* And by raising this question the empirical speculator at once brings in the whole of Platonism and innate ideas by a side gate, just after they had been driven out at the grand entrance; for how can this question be answered except in the well-known words of Leibnitz—“*Nihil est in intellectu quod non prius fuerit in sensu, NISI INTELLECTUS IPSE.*” Mr. Locke’s successors, however, have shown no inclination to follow his example in this respect. They have been ambitious of the cheap popular virtue of consistency, which even thieves and murderers may achieve; and verily they have had their reward. Their master may be compared to a man who held out a poison in his right hand, and administered forthwith the antidote with his left. His followers, from Helvetius to Mill, thinking—naturally enough perhaps—that the right hand contained the right thing, instantly snap it up and ran away with it, not choosing to encumber

themselves with the incongruous bounty of the left. The fruit has been that climax of nonsense in which half truths always issue when left to blossom by themselves. The one-sidedness of the philosophy taken from Locke's right hand, which, in a popular way we may call Materialism, culminates in the Nihilism of John Stuart Mill. Under his cunning manipulation not only mind vanishes but the outward world also. "It may be safely laid down as a truth that of the outward world we know and can know nothing, except the sensations which we experience from it ; ontology therefore is not possible." So what Plato called the human mind and the New Testament the human soul, becomes only a bundle of sensations. But the fallacy involved in this phraseology is easily pointed out. Instead of saying, We know nothing but sensations, he ought to have said, Nothing but sensations, and the thoughts or ideas vulgarly called classes of things and laws of nature which we recognise in the outward world, by virtue of the thoughts and ideas that arise out of the necessary action of the thinking Unity, the Creator of thoughts and ideas within us; and an ontology therefore is possible, because we know what we are as thinking beings by the very act of thinking, and we know what the world is as the general and absolute thought, or rather the product and manifestation of absolute thought, by the recognised identity of its working and products with the working and products of our own minds. In other words, Thought, or Reason, or Mind—God the absolute thought, and man in his little world of limited thinking, is the only thing that is or can be meant by an ontology, and is known partly as direct fact, partly as indirect, but

assured inference from unequivocal manifestation. This is the common sense of the whole matter; and whosoever will not accept this may content himself with Nihilism and Atheism. I cannot.

So much for the strictly metaphysical part of the empirical doctrine. Let us now consider shortly its application to morals. "Moral principles," says Mr. Locke (i. 3), "are even further removed than intellectual ones from any title to be innate. Will any one say that those who live by fraud and rapine have innate principles of truth which they allow and assent to?" This question displays in the most vivid manner the extraordinary misconception, not to say wrong-headedness, which possessed the English philosopher as to this whole matter. The nature of innate ideas implies neither universality nor inaccessibility to corruption. A man may be born with an innate sense for music, though all his fellows were as harsh as asses or as deaf as stones. If some men are colour-blind, and others purblind, and others altogether blind, these defects, inadequacies, or total eclipses of vision, do not make light intrinsically a less enjoyable thing, or the healthy eye an organ less marvellously adapted for enjoying it. As with vision so with morals. A whole population given to drunkenness does not make drunkenness a whit less beastly, nor will the general practice of fraud and rapine render the appropriation of my labour by another man's rapacity a whit more reasonable. Again says Mr. Locke (i. 3, 4), "There cannot any one moral rule be proposed whereof a man may not justly demand a reason," from which sentence it plainly appears, that, whereas by innate ideas Plato means the necessary expression of reason in a normally developed

mind, Locke understands by them some blind unaccountable impulse independent of and extrinsic to reason. The supplying of a reason for any course of action, say for speaking the truth or keeping a man's word, does not in the least make that course of action less the product of a truthful instinct in nature, or an innate love of truth. Morality is not the less innate because it is reasonable; but inasmuch as it is an essential element in the universal or divine Reason, in virtue of this it is necessarily an inborn quality in the individual or human reason, always of course with the probability of those large exceptions and defections which the very nature of finite existence implies. But we need not detain ourselves with a chapter of such shallow misunderstandings. The immoralities and follies of men, though a thousand times as many as they are, no more affect the inborn necessity and absolute immutability of the moral law, than the false summing of a class of schoolboys affects the relations of number. Errors are as common in arithmetic as in morals; only men hire those special pleaders, their passions, to justify the moral blunder, while the arithmetical blunder is exposed by the master of accounts. But though Mr. Locke argues against the existence of innate ideas in morals with even more self-gratulation than in his psychological account of the formation of ideas, we are not to suppose that his ethical theory was in any respect identical with that of the modern Utilitarians. He sowed the seed for their doctrine, no doubt, but himself had his garner well stored with grain from a very different source. He was a Christian, and believed in Divine law; he was a theist and believed in God. The modern Utilitarian believes only in a bundle of

sensations and in an invariable sequence. By denying innate ideas of morality, Mr. Locke, as his illustrations prove, only meant to proclaim the very obvious fact, that, as all men obviously do not agree in their principles of action, it is reasonable to demand of them some reason for accepting one principle of action rather than another. No man can object to such a reasonable demand. But this does not prevent him in another place (ii. 33. 11), from talking, as no modern Utilitarian would, of "the unchangeable rule of right and wrong which the law of God hath established." This method of speaking, common to Locke I believe with many of the most solid thinkers of his time, would lead me to class his ethical doctrine under the rubric of what might be called THEOCRATIC INSTITUTIONALISM; that is to say, he looks on morality as the result of a law laid down and sanctioned by the ultimate source of all laws, physical as well as moral. This, no doubt, seems to imply something arbitrary, which neither Plato nor Aristotle would allow to be possible in any of the fundamental manifestations of Divine reason; but notwithstanding this preference of the word *νόμος*, law, to *φύσις*, nature, had the English thinker been cross-questioned on the subject, he would probably have said that these institutions or laws which God lays on man flow necessarily from the excellence of the Divine nature; and this would have been pure Platonism. That he was sound-hearted at bottom no less than sound-headed, his book amply proves, notwithstanding the confusion of ideas in which he entangled himself by the assertion of propositions which, when logically followed out, lead directly to materialism in philosophy, atheism in theology, and sensualism in morals.

The next significant name in the genealogical tree of modern Utilitarianism is DAVID HARTLEY. As it was the distinction of Mr. Locke to have given respectability to the vulgar British prejudice against innate ideas, so the claim of Hartley to reputation rests on his having first given prominence to the doctrine of the association of ideas, a doctrine which from its originator down to the most recent times, plays an important part in every form and phasis of speculative and practical externalism. Hartley was a Yorkshireman, born at Armley, near Leeds, in the year 1705, educated at Cambridge originally for the Church; but having a thoughtful mind and a tender conscience, he did not feel himself in a condition to subscribe the Church Articles in the off-hand way which academical morality sanctioned; and accordingly betook himself to the study of medicine, an art which he afterwards practised with success, first in Newark and London, and then at Bath, where he died. These facts are of great significance, as indicating the remarkable combination in his character and works of an extremely sensitive evangelic morality, with a tendency to give physical explanations of spiritual operations, from which evangelic moralists are naturally averse. The object of his great work, *Observations on Man*, published in the year 1749, is to give a complete treatise of human nature on the inductive method of Locke and Newton; and accordingly the first volume, which contains his most peculiar views, is merely a following into detail of the doctrine of Locke, that all our knowledge proceeds from sensation, and that ideas in the brain are the product of impressions on the sensuous nerves. This one-sided notion Hartley



pursues into the inmost network and curious membranous wrappings of the brain, and by the action and reaction and interaction of vibrations and vibratiuncles in that region, attempts to explain the generation of thought and reasoning; and this he does through long chapters, and with not a little iteration, in language than which the most extreme materialist could desire nothing more crass. In fact, we find in Hartley the great precursor of those masters of physical science in the present day, who seem to expect some important discovery in mental science from the curious comparison of cerebral structure in the monkey and the man. A few short extracts will make this more obvious. "Simple ideas," he says, "run into clusters and create complex ideas" —(i. 75.) Here we have that vague use of the word "idea," which serves equally for a sensation and a thought, and which lies at the bottom of all that strange confusion of thought which runs with such unhappy persistency through all the speculations of Mr. Locke. Again, "Ideas, intellect, memory, fancy, affections, will, all these are of the same original, and differ only in degree, or some accidental circumstance; they are all deducible from the external impressions made on the senses, the vestiges, or ideas of these, and their mutual connexion by means of association taken together and operating on one another" (i. 80). And in harmony with this (i. 101), he afterwards gives a formal derivation of ideal vibratiuncles from sensory vibrations; and (103) talks of that "idea or state of mind, *i.e.* set of compound vibratiuncles, which we term the WILL;" and again (p. 212) he says, "the permanence of sensations is of the nature of an idea." Here the great

mystery which puzzled the Greeks so much, the mysterious bond which unites the *ἓν* and the *πολλά*—the one and the many—is solved very decidedly, as it would appear, on the Epicurean side. It is not the one which produces the many, but the many which produce the one; the one—what I call Mind, Will—is only a modification of the many. The radical objection to all this is that every man who is not a professional metaphysician feels it to be nonsense; the popular feeling protests; Shakespeare, who represents the thoughts and the language of a high and a healthy humanity, never talks in this style; and, more than that, the profoundest thinkers from Plato down to Hegel find in the proposition that thought is manufactured out of sensations a much greater mystery than that which this theory was invented to explain. One feels conscious that sensations might go on for ever, and not produce anything that had the slightest semblance to a thought; just as rain and sunshine acting on thistle-down from summer to summer produce only thistles and not roses. It appears, indeed, that our inductive philosopher is here involving himself in the vulgar fallacy of confounding the occasion or the condition of a thing with the cause. An accidental occasion, or an indispensable condition, are equally remote from the idea of a cause. The accidental occasion, for instance, of a house being built on a certain site, is that a certain gentleman, happening to take a walk in a certain district, and being not averse to house-building, determines to have a house on that site; the indispensable condition of the house being erected is that there should be a site for it to stand on, and stone and lime for it to be built with; but the only proper efficient

cause of the house being a house is the mind of the architect, the plan which that mind originates, and the instructions which he gives to the contractor, and the contractor to the masons. The sensuous tendency which Hartley's medical studies had given to his thoughts comes out strongly in another passage (i. 342), where he attempts to explain the evidence of mathematical axioms:—"We infer that  $2 + 2 = 4$  only from prior instances of having actually perceived this; and from the necessary coincidence of all these instances with all other possible ones." This recalls a famous passage in J. Stuart Mill's treatise against Sir W. Hamilton, in which he stamps with his authority the ingenious demonstration of a London barrister, to the effect that "in some possible world two and two may make five"—where, however, the more recent is grandly consistent as compared with the wavering double-sidedness of the more ancient speculator. The fact of the matter is, that Hartley, like Locke, was swayed at bottom by a sound sense and a lofty religious philosophy which crossed his mechanical theories; whereas the modern thinker, not believing in Mind, properly so called, at all, but only in a bundle of sensations and a thread of associations, like the Romanist Transubstantiation doctors, had no scruple in flinging open defiance in the face of Reason, and making a public ovation of unmitigated nonsense. Such is the natural culmination of all one-sided philosophizing. The seed of a favourite fancy grows up into a stately dogma; the dogma blossoms into a paradox; and the paradox ripens into an absurdity. The extreme nonsensicality of Mill, and the mildly modified error of Hartley with regard to

the nature of mathematical evidence, arise from the same cause. They are only the natural expression of the principle that thought is sensation and sensation is thought; thought the matured sensation, and sensation the nascent thought. Mill denies altogether the existence of thought as a distinct thing from sensation; therefore he is quite consistent to say that in some possible world two and two may make five; for it is as a thing thought, and not as a thing perceived, that in the science of number  $2 + 2 = 4$ . Mill, in fact, by this paradox, with a hardihood of consistency which is almost sublime, denies the possibility of science altogether; there is no *ἐπιστήμη* of any kind possible any more than ontology; only *ἐμπειρία* is possible—an experience of something that is accidentally what it is, and may have been otherwise. This is the highest power of what the Germans call the “Lockian empiricism;” and Mr. Mill in asserting the contingency of all science, has argued, as a good logician could not but do, from that half of the truth of things which it has been the unfortunate destiny of him and his school to mistake for the whole. As for Hartley, he qualifies his one-sidedness with a condition which takes the sting from its nonsense, and, like Locke, saves himself by a very transparent inconsistency; for he talks of a “*necessary coincidence*” of a certain number of observed equalities with all possible equalities; interpolating thus into the product of sensations the idea of necessity which belongs to a different region altogether, and by no possibility could grow out of a mere succession of sensuous impressions and nervous thrills, however often repeated. A tide-waiter may feel convinced that the tide will

flow to-morrow just as it has flowed to-day, and has flowed regularly ever since he began to observe its motions; but no degree of strength in this conviction comes up to the certainty which every sane man has that two and two not only always do make four, and always have made four, but in every possible world must make four. The two certainties differ not in degree only but in kind; and mathematical demonstration having to do only with thoughts, the creation of pure mind, cannot in the slightest degree be affected by any complete or incomplete realization of these thoughts in any time, past, present, or to come. When I say that all the angles of a triangle are equal to two right angles, or that the angle at the centre of a circle is double the angle at the circumference, I prove this from certain necessary relations of lines to lines drawn under conditions of which my thought is the absolute master. The proof is only the evolution of what lies in the thing,—of what cannot be otherwise, so long as the figure remains subject to the dictatorial power of my conception.

It will be now quite evident from these specimens, that Hartley's philosophy is just the sensuous side of Locke worked curiously into detail, with a practical rejection of the intellectual side. Indeed, he says expressly (i. 360) that "all our most complex ideas arise from sensation, and REFLECTION IS NOT A DISTINCT SOURCE, as Mr. Locke makes it." This throwing of reflection overboard is the necessary postulate of all the absurdity that afterwards grew out from the Lockian philosophy; and James Mill accordingly<sup>1</sup> disowns the "ideas of reflection" with

<sup>1</sup> *Analysis*, ii. 137, 139.

the same fatal one-sidedness, and, it may be added, with the same transparent superficiality of logic; for when a man talks of "generalizing states of consciousness," what is this but another term for reflection? Generalizing is a species, and one of the most universally practised species, of reflection.

It was necessary to be thus particular about Hartley's doctrine on the generation of ideas, because, as expressed in the above passages, it is one of the broadest statements of Externalism possible, and if consistently followed out, as it has been by the Mills, neither morals nor mathematics can escape from its grasp. According to this doctrine there exists no morality founded on the eternal reasons and relations of things, but all notions of right and wrong proceed from association alone, from clusters of ideas which are only modified sensations,—all affection as well as all reasoning being the mere result of association—(i. 499.) Let us now inquire a little more closely what this ASSOCIATION is, which performs such marvels in the transmutation of sensations into ideas; for surely never was a word so largely used by philosophical writers in recent times, and so villanously abused. Association is a popular term, and therein precisely lies its large capacity of doing harm, when sophistically used. Now what it means in popular language is pretty plain. When I think of London I think of beauty, splendour, magnitude, multitude, wealth, din, incalculable noise of rattling cabs above ground and of screeching railways under ground. These are my associations with London. When I think of Oxford, I think of Greek and Grammars and square caps, of

mitres, and lawn sleeves, High Church and Broad Church, learning and luxury, bigotry and boating, cricket, cram, and scholarly conceit. When I think of the Highlands, I think of Bens and Glens, of lochs and waterfalls, of steamboats and tourists, of salmon-fishing, grouse-shooting, deerstalking, Free Churches, untrousered legs, and Ossianic poems. There does not seem much mystery in this. Ideas must hang together somehow or other; if they did not, they would be like a swarm of mad bees in our head, and would reel about in an unmanageable chaos; if therefore they are to hang together in some way, what more natural than that those ideas which come in together should remain together, and that those which have a family likeness and affinity should arrange themselves into companies. Add to this the natural tendency of black to recall white, and of life to suggest death, and you have the whole three bonds of association among human thoughts and emotions—contiguity, similarity, and contrast—of which philosophical writers make parade. Now what is the place which belongs to this popular principle of association in a system of metaphysics or mental philosophy? To me its place appears a very secondary one; and to give it any place at all we must carefully distinguish between accidental and necessary, between ephemeral and eternal associations, the confounding of which rather seems to stand out as the prominent employment of the Sensation philosophers. There are two great classes of associations, the one principally of external and accidental, the other of internal and necessary origin; the one dominant in weak minds, the other in strong minds; the one common to us with the brutes, the

other altogether impossible to brutes ; the one more in the manner of a loose bundle, the other in the style of a stable architecture. With people not much given to think consecutively ideas are apt to hang together by certain mere superficial points of attachment ; like drifted matter on an open beach, they lie just as they come in ; the most incongruous things together all in a heap. Such associations, subjected to no controlling and discriminating power, are the fruitful source of all vain opinions, prejudices, senseless conceits, and hollow reasonings. With another class of people, again, in whom a strict watch is always kept over the materials with which sense supplies the mind, we find a totally opposite sort of associations. In this case the influence of the external factor diminishes, while the internal factor comes largely into play. The mind of such persons is not merely a mirror of such things as may chance to fall upon it, it is a commander-in-chief and a dictator, which discriminates, selects, and disposes according to an innate ordering faculty, which rejoices to trace out the cognate order which everywhere lives beneath the diverse surface of external things. The former of these forms of association is always more or less arbitrary ; the latter is imperial and absolute ; the one claims kinship with mere fancy and fashion ; the other is reason in the realm of imagination rejoicing in the discovery of what under various guises is only a manifestation of the eternally Reasonable. Now the fault of the Association theory as used by moralists of the Utilitarian school, is that they have left reason altogether out of the account, and fixed their eyes exclusively on those external associations



which form the principal furniture of the lower class of minds; nay, they have gone further than this, and systematically explained away the highest ideas, such as Beauty and Duty, into mere unsubstantial or monstrous products of some abnormal association! The applause which Alison received in Edinburgh by the publication of a treatise on Beauty, the drift of which was to resolve all our ideas of what is excellent in form or expression into mere arbitrary association, is one of the great reproaches of the Scottish philosophy. Similar ideas with regard to Duty are vented by Professor Bain.<sup>1</sup> Here, as in every other case, we see that it has been the business of the successors of Locke in this country to exaggerate his errors and to omit his truths. With regard to association Mr. Locke (iii. 33) did the wiser thing when he treated it not as the handmaid, much less as the substitute for reason, but rather as its great enemy; and in the domain of morals, particularly, Professor Ferrier does not overstate the matter when he says in his own eloquent way that the Utilitarian philosophy presents to us "not the picture of a man, but that of a weathercock shifting helplessly in the winds of sensibility, a wretched association-machine, through which ideas pass, linked together by laws over which the machine has no control."<sup>2</sup> And another sturdy Scotch thinker, yet alive, justly indignant at the juggle which has been played with this word, bursts out into the exclamation, "The Association psychology,—that barren bastard, between Materialism and Idealism, which, but intended as a jeer to the priest, is a disgrace to common-

<sup>1</sup> *Emotions and Will*, xv. p. 290.

<sup>2</sup> On Consciousness; *Works*, i. 195.

sense." Thus the Scottish interpreter of Hegel ; but though these strong words, in the fulness of their meaning, may be applicable to his successors, Hartley certainly never intended by his curious interplay of vibrations and vibratiuncles to jeer the ministers or to damage the cause of Christianity. In this respect he was a perfect parallel to Locke. He had inherited the central idea of all true philosophy,—the idea of God,—from Christianity ; and he stuck by that. And if in his first volume he seemed to derive the noblest thing internal from the basest things external, to turn the whole miraculous world of thought and feeling, as Ferrier says, into a wretched "association-machine," it was not so bad after all ; for behind the machine he believed also in the steam, and the imperial mind of Him who made the machine ; so in theology he remained a sound theist, and in morals he went so far as literally to stumble on the paradoxical love of "self-annihilation," so prominent in the transcendental ethics of Budd. Hartley was the most pious and the most pure of metaphysical writers ; and while he balanced his first proposition that "sensations beget ideas" by a second, that "God is the source of all Good" (i. 114), and a third, that "Final causes are the key to all mystery" (i. 366), he might launch his book into the world with a good conscience, and the sure hope of a good result, if only people would take him as a whole. This, however, unfortunately, people had not the thought or the will to do ; the fewest people, Goethe said, can comprehend a whole ; so they took up his sensuous association, and left his spiritual piety to float. He fared in this like St. Paul, whose sound sense, we read, certain persons lightly dis-

missed, who were forward to wrest his more obscure doctrines to their own destruction.

There are two points generally discussed in ethical treatises, which belong most naturally to our present rubric ; *first*, whether moral judgments are performed by a separate faculty called Conscience ; *second*, whether all our emotions are not originally selfish ; whether benevolence, like remorse, is not a derived and compounded rather than an original and simple element of our nature. To both these questions the Association theory of Hartley gave the start ; for with him, as we have seen, everything is compounded ; will, judgment, conscience, whatever acts seem most emphatically to proceed from the imperial I within, are radically only transmuted sensations, the composite result of a curiously interwoven tissue of associations. Now there are no questions in ethical science more easily answered than these. Conscience is certainly not a separate faculty ; it is an exercise of judgment, that is, of discriminating reason, accompanied with an emotion. You confess to me, for instance, as your friend, that on such and such an occasion, from a regard to some petty interest, or a desire to curry favour with some influential person, you displayed a cowardly reticence, where an open profession of your sentiments would have been advantageous to the cause of humanity ; and you feel ashamed of your conduct. Here is nothing but Reason applied to action ; and the emotion of self-reproach in reference to an unreasonable action, which is the exact correlative of the feeling of incongruity which attaches itself to a false proposition. Man is not a mere cognitive machine ; he has emotions of delight, which make him start from his seat

and cry out *εὔρηκα* ! at the naked perception of a purely speculative truth, much more when he uses his reason on the most important acts that concern the well-being of himself individually, and the society of which he is a part. Let anything very good be done by his tribe, or nation, or church, if he is a complete man he instantly flames up into a noble enthusiasm, and becomes ambitious of attempting like deeds ; let anything very bad be done, he fumes, in grim indignation, or blushes with shame, and is ready to reproach and to condemn, and even to trample his proper self under foot. This is the most natural thing in the world ; the necessary result of applying reason to action at all ; for a man cannot act without motive power, that is, without passions, which may be either noble or base. But though there is no separate faculty called Conscience, there is a peculiar sensibility of the soul in reference to moral action, when judgment is pronounced by any individual on the character of any action which he has performed. Self-condemnation, self-reproach, and, in their sharpest potency, what are called the stings of remorse, are judgments of reason accompanied by emotions, which well deserve a separate name ; and just as for the classical Latin *judicium* when speaking of the fine arts, we now use the peculiar word TASTE, so for our judgments of actions, with the peculiar emotions which accompany them, we use the word CONSCIENCE. It is not a new word ; it is as old as Periander and Bias ;<sup>1</sup> it has been used

<sup>1</sup> Bias ἐρωτηθεὶς τι ἂν εἴη τῶν κατὰ τὸν βίον ἀφόβων εἶπεν ἀγαθὴ συνείδησις.

Περιανδρὸς ἐρωτηθεὶς τι ἔστω ἐλευθερία εἶπεν ἀγαθὴ συνείδησις. STOBÆUS, *Sermon.* cvi.

by both heathens and Christians for more than two thousand years ; and there is no reason why it should be abolished. The ignoring of its compound character by incurious people can do no harm ; its analysis into practical reason and passion by the more curious can do little good. When, on the other hand, it is declared generally to be the mere product of association, a great deal of harm may be done ; for from this doctrine a consistent one-sided moralist may prove that morals are the mere creatures of habit, fashion, fancy, and caprice, as readily and with precisely the same warrant that Alison proved that beauty is an accidental product of the same unreasoning elements. What we ought to say is simply this—there is an enlightened conscience, and there is an unenlightened conscience ; neither of these can act independently of associations ; for associations supply the bonds by which the materials of thought and feeling are bound into separate parcels ; but the difference is this : in the enlightened conscience feelings and actions are bound together by associations over which cultivated Reason has exercised a control ; in the unenlightened conscience, where the emotions connected with the performance of certain actions are the crude product of all sorts of random influences, it is natural that moral judgments should exhibit all sorts of inadequacy, perversity, and absurdity. To a conscience so constituted the neglect of a piece of insignificant silly ceremonial may cause more pain than the commission of a murder.

As to the sophistical refinement that all our social sympathies are fundamentally selfish, there can be no doubt that, under the influence of that passion for unity which is the inspiration of system-builders,

Hartley, after Hobbes, did common sense the dishonour of publicly propounding this theory. But he propounded it, after his fashion, in a very innocent way ; in such a way indeed as to show that the whole question arises out of a confusion of language, or, what is worse, a studied affectation of using words in a different sense from that in which they are used by the vulgar.<sup>1</sup> To the thinker this is a matter of indifference ; not so to the vulgar : they all insist in using common words in their common sense, and allow the subtle qualifications of the philosopher to drop. It is strange, however, to observe that there are even at the present day writers of pith and judgment who seem to imagine that there is something more than a mere juggle of words in this question. Mr. Barrett, in his *Physical Ethics*, an ingenious and thoughtful work, says that "the merit of Hartley was not only that he showed the ultimate selfishness of all motives, but that he saw the true subordination among the various emotions, and their natural evolution from their simple elements." This sentence, by the simple abuse of a single word, does great injustice to Hartley. The word *selfishness*, in the classical use of the English language, is a word of a very bad odour ; it is equivalent to the *φιλαντία* of the Greeks, and means that excessive regard to self which leads a man to disregard and to disown the rights and feelings of other selves in the complex social machine of which he is a part. Now Hartley

<sup>1</sup> Bentham said, "I am a selfish man, as selfish as any man can be ; but in me somehow or other selfishness has taken the shape of benevolence" (*Works*, xi. 95). This is neither wit nor sense, but an affectation of humility of which one should have thought Bentham would not have been guilty.

does not use this word ; he uses a word capable also of a good meaning—*self-interest*, better still if he had stumbled on Bentham's phrase, *self-regard*. But as it is, the ingenious association-moralist (i. 458) divides self-interest into three species—

*Gross self-interest,*  
*Refined self-interest, and*  
*Rational self-interest,*

which, when analysed, turn out to be altogether different things baptized with the same name. If a rational self-interest convinces me that, when I see my neighbour fall into the sea, it is my duty to jump in after him at the risk of being drowned myself, it requires an open force put upon language to say that such an action is the result of any kind of deliberate self-regard ; it seems more like the result of a social instinct, and so far from being the product of any sort of prudential calculation, it is more likely to be strangled in the first conception than brought to a brilliant birth by the consideration of self in any shape. It seems to me indeed quite unworthy of anything styling itself philosophy to deal in such manifest quibbles. I might in a similar way, for instance, classify all religions under a common name, according as they are inspired by

*Gross reverence,*  
*Refined reverence, and*  
*Rational reverence ;*

but though the name is the same in all the three cases, the feeling may be very different, and the

product altogether opposed ; for the gross reverence of vulgar superstition may be founded on fear, while the rational reverence of enlightened piety may be based on philosophic wonder and on that perfect love which casteth out fear.

Much less ingenious than Hartley as a speculator, but more distinct, perspicuous, and effective as a writer, was Dr. PALEY, a man whose position among the thinkers of the last century, though somewhat dwarfed by the contemporary magnitude of Hume and Bentham, will ever secure him an honourable place among the preachers of the Utilitarian doctrine. As an author, he commanded a wider circle of intelligent readers than any of his contemporaries who handled the same subjects ; he was a Churchman too, the only clergyman, so far as I know, among the Utilitarian doctors ; and the last of that school—Austin only excepted<sup>1</sup>—who did not think it a disgrace but an honour to keep on friendly terms with Christianity. The salient points of his moral philosophy are four—Utility, the doctrine of Consequences, the Will of God, and the Future life. Of the first, what remains to be said will be said more opportunely when, in the next section, we shall have to discuss Hume ; the doctrine of Consequences a passing hint under Bentham will dismiss ; and for the other two points a few sentences may suffice. “Virtue,” according to Paley, “is the doing good to mankind in obedience to the will of God for the sake of everlasting happiness.”

<sup>1</sup> The value of Mr. Austin's work is more juridical than moral, and the ethical part of it is so entirely identical with Paley that for the purposes of the present survey it did not seem to demand special notice.



This definition characterizes the man, the book, the age, the country, and the profession to which he belonged admirably. It is a definition that, taken as a matter of fact, in all likelihood expressed the feeling of nine hundred and ninety-nine out of every thousand British Christians living in these islands in the generation immediately preceding the French Revolution ; still, it is a definition which contains as many errors as it contains clauses. In the first place, as to the doing good to mankind, it is a principle which lies at the basis of the doctrine Utility, and has its origin doubtless not so much in modern anti-Christian systems as in the prominence which Christianity gives to works of charity and brotherly-kindness ; than which practically of course there can be nothing better, but as part of the definition of virtue in this place it is faulty ; for virtue of various kinds may be exercised where no men exist to be the objects of our benevolence, as with Adam in Paradise, and Robinson Crusoe in his desert island, and the poet Campbell's Last Man. Then as to the Will of God, that no doubt is a power which overrules all ; tides and tempests and thunderstorms must obey that, and human life of course no less ; but what constitutes the Divine will, and how is it to be learned, in what way by the Christian, and in what other way by the unbeliever ? Properly speaking, the will of God rather expresses the ultimate source of virtuous conduct than furnishes a practical definition of its quality. Lastly, as to the everlasting happiness, this is the greatest blunder of the three. It may no doubt be very true under the relations in which it was spoken, that " if in this life only we have hope in Christ we are of all men

most miserable :” that was a sentence which applied with the most vivid pointedness to St. Paul and to many others in similar circumstances ; but it is very far from furnishing a warrant for the general proposition that the sure expectation of an everlasting reward is a motive necessary for the existence of virtue in this mortal life. For if this really were the case, either the virtue of Socrates was no virtue at all, or a virtue far above the standard of any Christian virtue according to Paley’s definition ; for Socrates died the death of a martyr with a very doubtful faith of what might happen to him after death. But, in fact, the prospect of an external reward is no part of any virtue, either Christian or heathen,—rather in many cases would annihilate the very idea of virtue. To give away ten pounds to-day with the sure expectation of getting a thousand pounds for it to-morrow would be no act of generosity. Aristotle says that a man is bound to be virtuous by the distinctive law of his nature, whether he lives seventy years or seven hundred years ; and Christianity surely ought to say no less. It is plain therefore that Dr. Paley was no great master of definitions. Nevertheless he wrote a most useful practical book ; such a book as justly commended itself to the practical English mind ; such a book as might have been expected from the finished manhood of a young man of whom when he went to college it had been said by his father, that “he had by far the clearest head he had ever met with.” A clear head unquestionably is a most useful quality in business and in daily life, but a quality which of itself will not make a great philosopher, or even a great man.

DAVID HUME, born at Edinburgh in the year

1710, was older than Dr. Paley by more than thirty years, though we have placed Paley first, as with Locke and Hartley completing the band of decidedly Christian Externalists. But in Hume we find the father of an altogether new school, the real progenitor of that living sect of philosophers whom the popular memory traces back no further than to Bentham and James Mill. In him therefore we may reasonably expect to find in one form or another all that came afterwards, some parts of course less worked out and less consistent, but the whole more rich, various, and complete; and, as in the case of Locke and Hartley, we may probably have cause to rejoice that by a certain broad and salutary inconsistency he saved himself from a narrow and pedantic dogmatism. We shall not therefore err in calling him comparatively a great man, but only comparatively; compared with the highest style of men, great with first-rate position and constructive minds, he is not great; he is only rich, various, and subtle. Nevertheless in respect of those who followed him with kindred tendencies, his stature remains unapproached. He is, as Emerson says of Plato, "a terrible destroyer of originalities." In the page of intellectual record he stands unquestioned as the man who shook all the easy thinkers of an easy century out of their easy seats with much observation; but there are two ways of shaking people out of their seats—first in the manner of an architect who pulls down a crazy old cabin in order that he may set quarrymen, masons, plasterers, carpenters, painters, and other artisans to work that they may erect a palatial structure in its stead; secondly, in the manner of a strong Samson, who shakes the pillars of some temple of Dagon, and buries him-

self and all the Philistines beneath its roof. That this is too much the manner of Hume as a philosopher is obvious ; only he does not actually die like Samson, but gets himself paralysed for a moment, and then recovers partially by virtue of that strong infection of common sense which, as a Scotchman, he naturally had. We have called him a rich man ; for unquestionably his treatise on the Principles of Morals, perhaps on the whole the best of his works, exhibits him as at once a subtle thinker, a shrewd observer, and a graceful stylist, in a combination as happy as it is rare. The man of the world is present here as well as the philosopher ; and perhaps the philosopher is not fully aware how much the acceptance of his abstract speculations is due to his secular shrewdness and his gentlemanly demeanour. But with all his wealth there is a certain meagreness about Hume arising out of his ignorance and entire misprision of the past. It is difficult for a man to write well on morals with an entire disregard of Aristotle and Plato, and with a fashionable Parisian contempt for the New Testament. No doubt this was to a great extent the misfortune of the philosopher rather than his fault ; yet the fact remains, and cannot but weigh heavily with all who would make a true estimate of the permanent value of his contributions to ethical philosophy. In Hume's time, as we have seen above (p. 131), Aristotle had not yet recovered from the supposed blows inflicted on him by Bacon—"his fame," to use Hume's own language, "was utterly decayed ;"<sup>1</sup> and as for Plato, St. Paul, and St. John, our subtle Scotch David had no organ for them, and could appreciate their excel-

<sup>1</sup> On the Different Species of Philosophy.

lence as some kilted piper picked up from Celtic games at Braemar might be expected to appreciate the harmonies of Sebastian Bach. Greek certainly he had—the fruit of private study in his riper years—more than usually falls to the lot of Scottish philosophers; and what he had of that noble language he knew how to use more effectively and with more grace and originality than many English scholars with ten times his erudition; but in reading his *Principles of Morals* I find no trace of any appreciation of the work done by his great Hellenic predecessors; on the contrary, I find the strange delusion possessing both him and Bentham that they were commencing a new epoch, and doing for moral science what Newton had done for physical, and what Socrates, Plato, Aristotle, Zeno, not to mention St. Paul and St. John, had altogether failed to do. Hume's own view of his relation to the ancient moralists is distinctly stated thus—"I found that the moral philosophy transmitted to us by antiquity laboured under the same inconvenience that has been found in their natural philosophy, of being entirely hypothetical and depending more on invention than experience; every one consulted his fancy in erecting schemes of virtue and happiness, without regarding human nature, upon which every moral conclusion must depend."<sup>1</sup> The complacent conceit of this passage to a man who really knows the ancient moralists,

<sup>1</sup> From a letter written in 1784.—Burton's *Life of Hume*, i. p. 35. In Sect. I. of the "*Inquiry into the Principles of Morals*," he says, "The ancient philosophers, though they often affirm that virtue is nothing but conformity to reason, yet in general seem to consider morals as deriving their existence from taste and sentiment." This is directly contrary to the fact.

is only less ludicrous than the benign self-satisfaction which inspires the well-known overture to the *Deontology* of Bentham. And the conceit becomes the more ludicrous when, in searching for this new principle which is to redeem ethics from fancifulness and transport it into certainty, we find nothing but the old Socratic formula :—

*Reason + sentiment = virtue = happiness.*

Nay more ; he defines this sentiment to be “an internal sense or feeling which nature has made universal in the whole species.” *Risum teneatis, amici ?* Here we have the innate ideas of Plato, one part of them certainly, which Mr. Locke was supposed to have blown into smoke. And afterwards, in language even more distinctly Platonic, in the section “Why Utility Pleases,” he says, “Had nature made no original moral distinctions independently of education, distinctions founded on the original constitution of the mind, the words *honourable* and *shameful*, *lovely* and *odious*, *noble* and *despicable*, had never had place in any language ; nor could politicians, had they invented those terms, ever have been able to render them intelligible, or make them convey any idea to the audience.” We see therefore in these passages plainly, that Hume was by no means a thorough and consistent Externalist ; he protests stoutly against Hobbes and all who declare that there is naturally no difference between men and tigers till the policeman introduced it ; and he does not seem to have approached Professor Bain’s conception, that Conscience is always and everywhere modelled on the statute-book. He agrees entirely with Socrates in assigning to love and the

social affections—the *τὰ φιλικά*—as strong a sway in human society as to the selfish principle. Here his common sense and his knowledge of the world saved him signally from the perverse ingenuity of Hartley. It will be observed through all his works, indeed, that though he was fond of puzzling himself as a thinker, he had fundamentally far more faith in the common instincts and feelings of the great masses of men than in the conclusions of the metaphysicians. “Nature,” he says wisely, “will always assert her rights, and prevail in the end over any abstract reasoning whatsoever;”<sup>1</sup> while with regard to individual speculators he says, “It is easy for a profound philosopher to commit a mistake in his subtle reasonings, and one mistake is the necessary parent of another, while he pushes on his consequences, and is not deterred from embracing any conclusion by its unusual appearance or its contradiction to common sense.”<sup>2</sup> And accordingly he makes no scruple of shelving the whole theory of the Ethics of Selfishness by the single sentence that it “seems to have proceeded entirely from that love of simplicity which has been the source of much false reasoning in philosophy.”<sup>3</sup> What then have we to lay hold of as distinctively Humian? Hitherto all is mere Socrates. A well-disciplined reason and a well-educated natural instinct of benevolence acting together for the public weal.—This is Utility; this is Hume; this is Socrates also, and Aristotle; for these great ancient thinkers had the *εὐδαιμονία* and the *ὠφέλιμον* in their eye and on their tongue as

<sup>1</sup> Sceptical Solutions of Sceptical Doubts.

<sup>2</sup> On the different Species of Philosophy.

<sup>3</sup> On Self-love.

much as any modern Utilitarian. Where then lies the differentiating element of this great progenitor of the most modern school? The difference, we must reply, is partly imaginary, arising out of the gross misconception of the character of ancient philosophy, transparent in all the writings of the Utilitarians; partly real, in so far as the ancients, while acknowledging Utility as a principle, kept Reason in the foreground, while the moderns push Utility into the van, and use Reason only as an instrument to make that point alone prominent. The modern Utilitarian accordingly looks more to the consequences of the action, the ancient Rationalist to the quality of the actor; but how this should be looked upon as a great discovery in morals, or as tending in any way to the elevation of human character or the regeneration of society, seems difficult to understand. It rather appears to me that the prominence thus given to the results of action has a tendency to turn the eye of men away from the great work of purifying the sources of action, the foulness of which is the constant cause of foul results; prudential considerations will be very apt to obtain undue preponderance; and everywhere, as Lecky observes, "the philosophy of sensation will be found to be accompanied with the morals of interest."

The extreme meagreness of the Utilitarian doctrine as thus produced from the propositions of its great progenitor, is something so remarkable that one is naturally driven to look about for some cause that may have given artificial importance to a matter in itself so insignificant; and this cause, so far as I can discover, lies nowhere so much as in the general reaction against Christianity which distinguished the



age of which Voltaire in France was the great spokesman, Hume in Scotland, and Bentham in England. Reaction is the universal law of all mundane forces ; and it was not to be expected that Christianity should escape it. Christian ethics being based purely, as we have seen, on a regard to the will of God, on purity of motive, and lofty self-sacrifice, even had they been left to work in all their natural integrity, would have demanded a doctrine of moral consequences to neutralize the necessary one-sidedness of their action. To have a good conscience was a most excellent thing, but to have a clean shirt was also a virtue. The Divine sanction given by Christian piety to Christian morals was naturally beneficial, but it was also possible, or rather from human weakness almost certain, that the science of human ethics might lose as much as it gained from alliance with Christian theologians, who are only too apt to " bend every branch of knowledge to their own purposes, without much regard to the phenomena of nature, or to the unbiassed sentiments of the mind."<sup>1</sup> Add to this the tawdry mummeries of ritualism, the insolence of haughty churchmen, the gross worldliness of fat beneficiaries, the morbid sanctitude of pietistical devotees, the unnatural austerities of monkish ascetics, and the grim severity of damnatory dogmatists, and we shall easily understand how a revulsion should have taken place, which would not be content till on the throne of morals it had supplanted Christ by Socrates, and Socrates by Epicurus. And this consideration opens up to us the second notable achievement of the subtle Scot in the important field of morals. Not content with

<sup>1</sup> Hume's *Essay On some Verbal Disputes*.

withdrawing virtue as much as possible from the region of personal sentiment into the wider domain of social wellbeing, he determined to strike at the root of the whole evil, as it appeared to him, by not only attacking Christianity, but by undermining that primary idea of CAUSALITY on which the idea of religion and the very conception of a God reposes. This was a daring business no doubt; but Hume was not the man to take things of that nature over-seriously; he would keep himself quite easy as to results; he would not make himself miserable by any unnecessary enthusiasm even for his own philosophy;<sup>1</sup> if he did not choke the Church-doctors, he would at least give them something to chew; and at all events he might effect a permanent divorce between human ethics and that sectarian theology to which it had been so unpropitiously yoked.

The foundation of this monstrous doctrine of ATHEISM is laid by our subtle Scotch Epicurus in the following way. In his chapter entitled "Sceptical Doubts," speaking of the origin of our ideas of *cause and effect*, he says, "When we find that any particular objects are constantly conjoined with each other, as the communication of motion by one billiard-ball to another, this knowledge arises entirely from *experience*, and is not a matter of *à priori* reasoning." Again: "The effect in this and in every case is totally different from the cause; the conjunction of every effect with its cause must appear arbitrary; every effect is in fact a distinct event from its cause. Hence we may discover the reason why no philosopher who is rational and modest has ever pretended

<sup>1</sup> "There is no enthusiasm amongst philosophers."—*On Providence and a Future State*.

to assign the ultimate cause of any natural operation, or to show distinctly the action of that power which produces any single effect in the universe. The ultimate springs or principles productive of natural phenomena are totally shut up from human curiosity and inquiry." Then in the next section he goes on to argue against the legitimacy of the common postulate of all scientific thought, that "similar sensible qualities proceed from similar secret powers." "All that experience can do is to show us a number of uniform effects resulting from certain objects, and to teach us that those particular objects at that particular time were endowed with such powers and forces." After this, in the chapter entitled "Sceptical Solution of Sceptical Doubts," he lays it down that since our belief that similar effects imply similar causes does not depend on reasoning, the only "principle on which it depends is Custom or Habit." In fact, "All inferences from experience are the effect of CUSTOM, not of REASONING." Cause means only "customary conjunction." Then, towards the conclusion of the same chapter, he says, "There is a kind of pre-established harmony between the course of nature and the succession of our ideas; and though the Powers and Forces by which the former is governed be wholly unknown to us, yet our thoughts and conceptions have still, we find, gone on in the same train with the other works of nature. CUSTOM is that principle by which this correspondence has been effected." Cognate with these chapters on Causation are some discussions that follow on the idea of power or necessary connexion, in which he maintains that this idea is not copied either from the observation of the operation of forces

in the external world or in the world of volition within us ; that in all cases what we know is only "the frequent CONJUNCTION of objects, not their CONNEXION;" "all events seem entirely loose and separate; and at bottom we have no idea of connexion or power at all, and these words are absolutely without any meaning;" and, philosophically expressed, "the sentiment or impression from which we form the idea of power or necessary connexion," is only "the customary transition of the imagination from one object to its usual attendant." And so "we may define a CAUSE to be one object followed by another, and where all the objects similar to the first are followed by objects similar to the second." Lastly, to crown this whole elaborate edifice of Scottish atheism, we have, in the chapter on "Providence and a Future State," the following sentences:—"When we infer any particular cause from an effect, we must proportion the one to the other, and can never be allowed to ascribe to the cause any qualities but what are exactly sufficient to produce the effect. Allowing, therefore, the gods to be the authors of the existence or order of the universe, it follows that they possess that precise degree of power, intelligence, and benevolence which appears in their workmanship; but nothing further can be proved. The supposition of further attributes is mere hypothesis." This argument is levelled against the perfection of the Divine workmanship and attributes. He then proceeds to annihilate, as he conceives, the Socratic argument from design in the following fashion:—"If you saw a half-finished building, surrounded with heaps of brick and stone and mortar, and all the instruments of masonry,

you might justly infer from this effect that it was a work of design and contrivance; and in reference to works of human art this reasoning is good, because *man is a being whom we know by experience*. But the case is not the same with our reasonings from the works of Nature. The Deity is known to us only by his productions, and is a single Being in the universe not comprehended under any species or genus, from whose experienced attributes or qualities we can by analogy infer any attribute or quality in him. The method of reasoning which we legitimately use in reference to the intentions and projects of men, can never have place with regard to a Being so remote and incomprehensible, who bears much less analogy to any other being in the universe than the sun does to a wax taper, and who discovers himself only by some faint traces or outlines, beyond which we have no authority to ascribe to him any attribute or perfection."

We have been at pains to transcribe these articulate sentences verbatim, selected from a sweep of some hundred pages of the Essays, because they really contain all that can be said in justification or palliation of that sort of positive or negative atheism which has recently been haunting the intellectual atmosphere of Europe, and poisoning the sources of social morality. Let us now see what they amount to.

In the first place, then, with regard to the general source of all our knowledge of matters of fact, it is quite certain we gain such knowledge only from experience; but this of course does not mean merely external experience of external objects. Whatever exists, the thinking I that is capable of taking cog-

nisance of objects, no less than the objects cognised, are known only by experience, could not be known otherwise. A thing must exist in order that it may be known to exist. Nothing is known by mere abstract reasoning independent of existence. If it be said that mathematics are so known, the answer is, that mathematics imply the existence of a thinker, and the existence of laws of thinking, and further, that the objects of mathematical science are thoughts, not existences, mere hypothetical conditions and arbitrary limitations of space and time. We are not therefore entitled to start with a presumption that whatever is not known by abstract reasoning falls under the category of mere accident or custom; in the wide range of what we know by experience some things may be accidental or customary, many things may be necessary; what things are absolutely necessary the Supreme Cause alone may know; but that customary conjunction is not a sufficient explanation of the order of phenomena which we admire in the outer or inner world, human reason may be quite strong enough without hesitation to assert. For, let us inquire how the idea of CAUSE arises. According to Mr. Hume it is nonsense; it is merely another word for custom; a constant custom is a cause. Now, according to the general sense of mankind in all ages, and the use of all languages,—a consent and a use to which Mr. Hume himself, as we have seen, in another place attaches the utmost importance,—while the inconstancy of a custom, by introducing the idea of whim and caprice, excludes the notion of a cause, at least of a cause which falls under the category of science, a constant custom is the very thing which naturally suggests the question, What

is the cause of this constancy? It is therefore something different from the constancy; and whether discoverable or not, is not to be confounded with the existence of that thing, or series of things, of which it is required as the explanation. Take an example. I see a certain person pass along the street before my window every morning at a quarter before nine o'clock, and another person following him regularly at ten minutes before nine. Here is a customary conjunction. If it happened once, or even twice, I should ask no questions, it might have been what men call accidental; but it has happened every day for six months, and I ask the cause. Am I wrong in doing so? Is there no cause? Or do I give a sufficient answer when I say it is a customary conjunction, or an invariable sequence? The invariability of the sequence, so far from offering any explanation of the cause, is the very thing that suggests it. I insist on believing that this invariability has a cause, and that it is neither an accident nor a custom. Of course it may be possible that I shall not be able to find out the cause; but that there is a cause I believe as firmly as that two and two are four. Now why am I entitled to demand a cause here, or in the case of any such conjunction? and what do I mean by it? I mean something that has an inherent and necessary virtue to produce the effect; and I am entitled to make the demand, just because I am a reasonable being, and because the exercise of reason has proved to me directly that invariable sequences are not produced except by the persistent application of some calculated force of which energizing reason is the source. I know by experience that whenever this presidency of reason is abolished, the

world in which I move instantly becomes a chaos ; and the living unity of that mind which I exercise in thinking, and which brings its own unity into the wide sphere of my thoughts, feelings, and actions, displays to me in the most direct way that the unity of plan between the different members of an invariable sequence can proceed only from that of which plan and unity can be predicated, viz., REASON. I derive my notion of cause therefore primarily from the most direct and certain of all sources, from my own existence ; and if Mr. Hume objects that I do not know how my mind acts on my body, or how my limb does not follow my will in the case of palsy in the motor nerves, this ignorance does not in the least shake my conviction that a cause is something different from a custom ; a piston or a paddle may be deranged, but the steamboat is moved by a cause nevertheless, and that cause is twofold,—the steam, and the mind of James Watt. These conclusions with regard to the works of man even Mr. Hume seems to regard as perfectly justifiable ; for, like all puzzle-headed paradox-mongers, he is forced to forget his own distinctions, and to speak of a cause after all, as something different from a custom. We are justified, therefore, in finding in the energizing reason of man a cause, and the only sufficient cause, for the reasonable works of man. But it is different, you say, with the works of God. Different unquestionably in some respects ; as the ocean, for example, is different from a drop of salt water, or the sun, as you say, from a wax taper, or a scuffle between two Irishmen at a fair from a great battle betwixt Prussia and France. Let it be so. There is an immense difference in magnitude betwixt man and God, be-



twixt the works of man and the works of God. Still that will not make a gulf sufficiently large to prevent mutual recognition. A drop of salt water, the chemist will tell you, contains every element that makes the mighty ocean a salt ocean, and not a fresh-water lake. The smallest spark from the largest conflagration is an affair of the same oxygen gas; and petty differences in the management of the smallest borough in Great Britain are the result of the same play of vanities, jealousies, stupidities, and spites that provoke the greatest wars on the battle-field of Europe. We shall therefore not be deterred by the magnitude of the Creator's works from recognising the excellence of their cause; we shall rather feel the more occasion to sing with the royal Hebrew psalmist, "*How excellent in all the earth, Lord, our Lord, is Thy name!*" No doubt there is another difference that separates human work from Divine. The work of God is vital work, ours is mechanical, mere puppetry, all the motive forces of which are borrowed from the exhaustless batteries of the Divine electricity. But this is only another reason for wondering with so much the more admiration, and worshipping with so much the more fervour. How healthy-minded, how noble, and how sublime, in reference to this matter, does that grand old Hebrew singer appear, with the flaming wings of his devout Muse, compared with this peeping Scotch metaphysician, keeping himself jealously free from the contagion of all intellectual enthusiasm, and discovering in this glorious universe only "some faint traces and outlines" of a self-existent Reason, enough to lead a man into puzzles but not to lift him into hymns! Truly a sorry spectacle! They will not

worship God, forsooth, these philosophers, because they do not know Him exactly as they know the machinery of their watches, because they do not see Him with their carnal eyes, because they cannot lay their fingers on Him. Well, let me ask them, Does any man see any man? Can any man put his finger upon me, or you, upon that which is properly called me and you? No; he sees only the man as revealed in his flesh, as manifested in his works. His soul looks through the windows of his eye; and his eye directs his hand where to strike. We believe in the man; we do not see him. If his works are full of order and beauty and purpose, we conclude that the man is reasonable; if they are mere disorder, ugliness, and haphazard, we conclude he is unreasonable. Not otherwise with our knowledge of God. "No man hath seen God at any time, nor can see." Creation is the face of God; the sun is the eye of God. Everywhere I see Him in his works radiant with reason, instinct with soul. I know Him as a child knows his father, as the shepherd's dog knows the shepherd, as a common soldier knows the great projector of the campaign, though he may never have seen him. I may not comprehend many of His movements (it would be a strange thing if I did), I may not understand much of that which most nearly concerns myself; but this necessary inadequacy of my finite faculty shall not prevent my acknowledgment, my loyalty, and my obedience. I know enough of God always to inspire wonder and to annihilate criticism; and this is my highest human wisdom.

So much for the poor sceptical bewilderment of the celebrated David Hume; into which den of dust

and cobwebs I certainly should not have strayed in this discourse, had experience not taught me that to deny God in the macrocosm necessarily leads to the denial of Mind in the microcosm, and to deny mind in man is to disown morality, or at least to stanch it in its principal well-head, and to poison the purest of its fountains. In forming a judgment of his character, however, we must not insist upon applying to him all the logical consequences of his own arguments. That his philosophy is speculative atheism is quite certain. By "emptying the idea of causation of its efficiency," to use Professor Ferrier's language,<sup>1</sup> "that is, of the element which constitutes its essence, he not only denied God, but he struck a blow which paralysed man's nature in its most vital function;" he was not however consistently and thoroughly an atheist; as a Scot he had too much sense to remain in his practical moments entangled in the unsubstantial tissue of sophistry and cobwebs which he had spun for himself in speculation, and his want of piety was a defect of sentiment rather than a revolt of reason.<sup>2</sup> We must remember also charitably, that he lived in a flat age, when it was always impossible for a man to be truly great. A little moral earnestness, of which the eighteenth century had nothing to give him, would have saved him from a great part of the barren subtlety which disfigures so many pages of his otherwise sagacious, pleasant, and profitable works. When we observe that as the prophet of that age he was in everything acute rather than strong, that in his literary tastes

<sup>1</sup> Ferrier, *Works by Grant and Lushington*, vol. i. p. 116.

<sup>2</sup> See the remarkable letter to Mure of Caldwell in *Burton's Hume*, i. 162.

he preferred Sophocles to Shakespeare, Epicurus to Plato, Lucian to the Apostle Paul, and Leo x. to Martin Luther, we shall not be surprised to find his moral treatise tainted with the notion that Christian virtue always means asceticism, and that religion is only a more respectable name for superstition. Pity only that in the present age some persons should be forward to use his arguments who have not the excuse of his position.

We have now finished our notice of those who are entitled to be called the founders of the Utilitarian school; those who follow, as the mere inheritors of principles already largely discussed, need not detain us long. Of these by far the most distinguished unquestionably is Bentham; so distinguished indeed, as in popular estimate to be accounted the founder of the school. But there is need of a distinction here. Those men found a school in the proper sense who teach the principles which it acknowledges; but in another sense he founds it who applies those principles to practice. In the first sense, the founders of the ethical doctrine which we are considering were Locke, Hartley, and Hume; in the other sense, Bentham. His glory lies not so much in expounding as in applying principles; he is a lawyer and a politician rather than a philosopher. Not however that he did not give himself the airs of a philosopher; this he did with observation, and was accepted by his disciples accordingly. Therein lay the mistake. It is not every man, not even every great man, who knows how to recognise the limits which nature has laid down to the exercise of his faculty. Napoleon the Great, in the pride of imperial command, overlooked the moral forces that

lay slumbering in the heart of the people, and was punished by a three days' cannonade at Leipzig, the prelude to his final chastisement at Waterloo. Jeremy Bentham, because he could tabulate Acts of Parliament with the astuteness of a barrister, the purity of a philanthropist, and the comprehensiveness of a statesman, conceited himself throned on a moral eminence from which he might look down with contempt on Plato and Socrates, and all the great moral teachers of the past. In the third chapter of the first volume of *Deontology, or Doctrine of Duty*, we read, "While Xenophon was writing history, and Euclid giving instruction in geometry, Socrates and Plato were talking nonsense under pretence of teaching wisdom. This morality of theirs consisted in words,—this wisdom of theirs was the denial of matters known to every man's experience, and the assertion of other matters opposed to every man's experience. And exactly in the proportion in which their notions on this subject differed from those of the mass of mankind, exactly in that proportion were they below the level of mankind." Such an exhibition of ignorance, insolence, and impertinence as this in a man of undoubted genius, were truly inexplicable, did we not bear in mind that genius even of the very highest kind is often accompanied by a very decided one-sidedness; and more than that, there were in the circumstances of Bentham's life not a few things that tended to raise to a maximum the dogmatism with which he was naturally endowed. He is by no means a solitary example of a great man, the sublime of whose excellence has been turned into the ridiculous for lack of a little Christian humility.

"Who is that young man who discourses on all subjects with such a wealth of resources?" said a distinguished guest at Worcester to Bishop Stillingfleet one day after dinner. "That is my chaplain, sir," replied the Bishop; "Bentley is his name—Richard Bentley—a very remarkable man, a man of gigantic learning, and who might be the greatest man in Europe, had he only a little modesty." Young Bentham had the misfortune to be a spoiled child—and not without cause, for he was by no means a common boy; his intellectual and moral endowments were both rare; this was the good gift of God; but he was brought up as a prodigy; this was the great blunder of his parents. Nor was the blunder mended when at a remarkably early age he was sent to Oxford. Public schools and colleges are often admirable institutions for teaching young men to find their level, but it was not so with Bentham; he had the misfortune to be born in a flat century, and fell among flat people. Everything that he saw in the great seat of English learning tended rather to pamper than to prune his conceit. He could write Latin verses as well as the best of them; but he rightly judged that at this time of day, in reference to the highest demands of a rational culture, this sort of exercise is at best a very pretty kind of trifling, and anything better did not grow there at that time. He seems to have got a taste of Aristotle's Logic—that was part of the academical routine,—but he had logic enough in his own brain, and could not be expected to reap much benefit from any barren exertations of a school-book. Logic is useful only as a flail, when it gets corn to thresh from other quarters; of itself it is utterly

unfruitful. Into the real gist and marrow of Aristotle and Plato it does not appear he ever entered, nor amongst the tutors of his college did any one offer a manuduction into these intellectual penetralia; it was the age of elegant grammarians and low churchmen; and when the Articles were duly subscribed and the Latin verses properly turned off, there seemed nothing more in prospect for the academical mind but port wine and chapel service, and, in pleasant summer weather, a little languid activity on the bowling-green. But this was not the sort of nutriment which could feed the fine spirit of a young Bentham, whose food was mere intellectual truth, and his drink pure human love. He had been born in a Tory family; he was bred in a Tory college; he had been kidnapped (to his lifelong horror) to sign the Articles of a Tory Church; but from all this Toryism the best part of his nature had received no nourishment. The consciousness grew, and one day burst out with a flash upon him, that Toryism was selfishness: that the British people, in common with himself, were lying languid and down-trodden, and rotting beneath the selfish dominance of an oligarchy, an oligarchy perhaps the most powerful that the history of the world knew; for, as he knew it, it certainly seemed fourfold,—an oligarchy of pedants, an oligarchy of priests, an oligarchy of lawyers, and an oligarchy of peers. Against all this the spirit of young Bentham, as courageous as it was pure, rebelled. He would pull it all down; though he stood alone in the world, like Plato's just man, he would pull it all down. And so he set himself valiantly to protest against the oligarchy of pedants, founded on a blind rever-

ence for the letter of dead books ; against the oligarchy of priests, founded on the real desire of power and the pretended admiration of an ascetic morality ; against the oligarchy of lawyers, who strangled the rights of the present by the fictions of the past ; against the oligarchy of peers, which in the government of the State preferred the interests of the favoured few to the happiness of the neglected many. And the issue was that young Bentham returned from Oxford, not to prosecute his legal studies at one of the Inns of Court, and advance himself to a position of wealth and honour by practising the curious art of giving a reasonable face to the most unreasonable of fictions, but as an armed apostle of intellectual, moral, juridical, and political democracy, and full of that sort of sacred fury which inspired the French democrats when they looked forward to a speedy millennium as the time "when the last king should be strangled with the bowels of the last priest."

The state of feeling here sketched is the only thing that, in my opinion, can afford a satisfactory explanation of the extraordinary one-sidedness and dogmatism of Bentham's moral philosophy. It was the creature of a reaction ; and such a reaction as is apt to exhibit itself most emphatically in the case of the most highly-gifted young men, who however sometimes, as increasing years bring extension of view, contrive to work their way to some Aristotelian mean point which permits the recognition of two opposite truths. But such was not the nature of Bentham. He worshipped the great goddess Consistency, and could see and work only in a straight line. To his dicta there was no limitation, any more than to those



of the Pope ; he held himself practically infallible. So the first thing that he determined to do was to re-establish the Epicurean doctrine that "Pleasure is the chief good ;" for "Epicurus," he expressly says, "was the only one among the ancients who had the merit of having known the true source of morality."<sup>1</sup> After this we need inquire no further. The novelty of this sentence is too dear a price to pay for its manifest error in elevating a species into the dignity of a genus, and for its manifest danger in stamping that which is highest in human nature with a label familiarly used to mark what is lowest. The great ancients whom Bentham despised made *εὐδαιμονία* or happiness the genus ; and this happiness, they said, one class of men sought to attain by *ἡδονή* or PLEASURE, another class by striving after the *τὸ ἀγαθόν* or the GOOD. This language, founded on the healthy instincts of human nature, the apostles of Christianity sanctioned with their authority when they talked of persons being "lovers of pleasure more than lovers of God ;" and to the present hour "a man of pleasure" is a phrase familiarly used in the English language to express one of the most trifling, contemptible, and useless members of society. And the reason of this use of language is obvious. Pleasure and Good, so far from being of a kindred nature, are generally directly opposite ; no doubt they both produce enjoyment, but the enjoyment in the one case is often passive, in the other always active ; in the one case generally shunning difficulty, in the other rather provoking it ; of the former the senses are the main organ, of the latter the reason ; the sensuous enjoyment man has in common with a

<sup>1</sup> *Introduction to the Principles of Morals, etc.*, chap. ii.

pig, the rational only as a man. It was therefore a strange service that Bentham assumed himself to have done to moral philosophy by confounding the poles of moral distinction; and his conduct can only be palliated, not justified, by the tendency of every reaction to swing itself into an extreme. Any peculiar provocation in Bentham's time calling upon him to reinstate the gospel of the flesh in the rights of which it had been deprived by St. Paul, one does not exactly see. Whatever faults he might have discovered in the morality of the clerical exclusives, purple doctors, and minute grammarians of Oxford, asceticism certainly was not one; feastings rather than fastings were the order of the day among the Dons; there remains, therefore, only the puerile delight of using a strong phrase, to palliate this gross confusion of the received terminology of moral science which he introduced. As for any other principles of morality that Bentham might have, they were merely what every other body had always professed. It did not require Hume, or any other sceptical solver of sceptical doubts, to teach mankind that Benevolence was naturally a good thing, and that no virtues were true virtues which did not tend to the public good. It happened therefore to Bentham, as it had happened to other promulgators of new gospels,—that what was most new in his system was least true, and what was most true was least new. The doctrine that Pleasure is the chief good, and that Epicurus was a better philosopher than Aristotle, will scarcely now, we apprehend, be seriously maintained; while, on the other hand, the maxim, "the greatest happiness of the greatest number," has always been the war-cry by which the most generous politicians have

been roused, and the load-star by which the most far-seeing statesmen have been guided. It is not, indeed, in the kingdom of ethics, strictly so called, that Bentham's merit is to be sought; specially rather in the outlying fields of jurisprudential and legislative economy, where that doctrine of consequences justly sways, which Paley erroneously sought to make regulative in the region of personal purpose, pure motive, and noble deed; and for his services in applying his favourite maxim to various departments of political, juridical, and social reform, the world can scarcely be sufficiently grateful. It is not often that so pure a philanthropist enters with victorious axe and mattock into domains bristling so rankly with all sorts of professional prejudice and professional selfishness. In this domain let him be loved as a man, revered as a patriarch, and even worshipped as a saint—he was a saint in his own peculiar way unquestionably; but let him not be lifted into Christian pulpits or academic chairs to indoctrinate the ingenuous youth of this country in a curious moral arithmetic how to maximize pleasure and to minimize pain. Not by such teaching, certainly, were heroes wont to be made in Sparta, in Athens, or in Rome.

With Bentham the edifice of Utilitarianism is complete, and there is little more to say about the matter. Those who came afterwards were expositors, not founders; they employed themselves in explaining the doctrines of their master, sometimes also in explaining them away; for, while bound to maintain the honour of the sect, they were sometimes dimly conscious and more than half ashamed of the base element out of which it sprang. One

of their foremost spokesmen was JAMES MILL, the father of the present distinguished logician and politician, John Stuart Mill. This gentleman, who is much respected by the school to which he belongs, in the year 1829 published a work entitled *An Analysis of the Human Mind*. This treatise I have read carefully, and am constrained to say that it appears to me an extremely meagre production; somewhat as if the mind of the author had been blasted and frosted by the arid and sharp east wind in the face of which—near Montrose—he was born. From his Life it would appear that he studied at the University of Edinburgh in the days of the great metaphysical school there, and that he devoted considerable attention to Plato. I have not the slightest reason to believe that the great idealist was much known even to the best thinkers in our Scottish metropolis at that time; but if Mill did study Plato thoroughly, it must have been, as Grote has done in our time, for the purpose of not understanding him. Certainly in his book I have found nothing but the materialistic side of Locke and Hartley worked out into a monstrosity; a cold thin horror of all spiritual mystery, and the shallow conceit that the primary divine force, which we call MIND, can be explained by a laboriously minute dissection of a merely physical machinery. Whatever that great juggler Association can be made to do in order to explain knowledge out of sensation, mind out of matter, and unity generally out of multiplicity, has been done in this book. For the special ethics of Utilitarianism there is nothing in James Mill that the student of Hume and Bentham will be likely to think worth remembering.

Among living thinkers there is none who stands before the public more prominently as the exponent of the Utilitarian ethics than JOHN STUART MILL.<sup>1</sup> But whatever may be the merits of this distinguished writer in the domain of logic, politics, and economics, which seem most cognate to his genius, there can be little doubt in the minds of thoughtful persons that his book on Utilitarianism has done more to undermine than to sustain the doctrine which it professes to expound. And the reason of this lies in a cause which is not less condemnatory of the doctrine than it is complimentary to its champion. Mr. Mill is too good a man to be the consistent advocate of a system which, as compared with other systems, is fundamentally bad. He is too earnest an apostle of the real moral progress of man to be a thorough-going disciple of a school whose natural element is Epicurean ease, sensual indulgence, and prudential calculation. His heart revolted against the degrading tendency of a philosophy which gave a primary importance only to what is low, and left the highest elements of human nature to make a respectable show before men with a borrowed and secondary vitality. But at the same time, he was a disciple of the school, and the son of his father, and thus by education and a sort of intellectual heritage, his head was committed to a doctrine for which his heart was naturally a great deal too good. The consequence was a sort of sophistry which, while we see through it, we cannot but admire. Departing from the original idea of his school, that pleasure is the only good, and that pleasures differ from one another only in intensity, he interpolates into

<sup>1</sup> [J. S. Mill died on the 8th of May 1873.]

the general idea of quantity of happiness the discriminating element of quality; and thus is thrown back virtually on those innate ideas which it is the characteristic boast of his school to have discarded. For the essential difference in the quality of high and low pleasures is not a matter to be proved by any external induction, but springs directly out of the intellectual and emotional nature of man, asserting its own innate superiority precisely as light asserts itself over darkness, and order over confusion. And thus, while he defends Utilitarianism successfully, so far as results go, he succeeds only by throwing overboard all that is most distinctive in the doctrine, and adopting secretly all that is most peculiar to the teaching of his opponents. In ancient times, between Epicureanism and Stoicism there was a distinct and well-marked line of demarcation, which, whether in speculation or in practice, no person could miss; now under Mr. Mill's manipulation, this distinction vanishes; the love of pleasure with which he started is sublimated into the love of virtue, and an ideal enthusiasm for the greatest possible happiness of all sentient creatures is substituted for the real and direct stimulus of pleasure which every man understands; and a Joseph Mazzini consecrating his whole life with the most intense enthusiasm and the most severe self-denial to the ideal of a possible Italian republic, is as much an Epicurean as David Hume sneering at all enthusiasm, and pleasing his soul with the delicate flatteries of fair dames in a Parisian saloon. This is to confound all things, and to reduce the whole affair to a fence of words rather than to a battle of principle. Nor need we be surprised at such a result; for the whole platform of morality in

modern times has been so elevated through the influence of Christianity that Epicureanism to win a hearing is constrained to profess a standard which shall not fall beneath that laid down in the Sermon on the Mount or in the 13th chapter of 1st Corinthians; and to do this with nothing but the individual selfish love of pleasure to start with, requires, it may be imagined, a very considerable amount of dialectic jugglery and shifting glamour of words. One is forced to explain—keeping Bentham's language—how the original, individual, and personal love of pleasure, which is and must be selfishness, manages from mere external considerations, for such only are left open by the deniers of innate ideas, to take the shape of benevolence. Like theologians who are bound to stick to an unreasonable creed, and yet, to save its credit, must make it appear reasonable, the Utilitarians, in striving to accommodate the principles of the lowest theory of morals to the demands of the highest, have not escaped the awkwardness of the strategist who, while making a real retreat, plays off some movements that look like an advance. Only in this case the strategist knows that he is deceiving his soldiers, and deceiving the enemy; whereas the logician who dexterously assumes a new position while seeming to maintain his old one is the happy victim of his own fallacies. He has changed front by a manœuvre which many persons may be too stupid to observe, and he has saved himself from the disagreeableness of a formal recantation. Such dexterous shifts are the convenient refuge of all one-sided theorists who insist on taking nature to school, and trimming human souls, like trees in a fruit-garden, after their

own favourite pattern. Meanwhile nature goes on heaving up her strong moralities from original pure fountains, regardless alike of the intense one-eyed dogmatism of the founders of ethical schools, and the ingenious apologies of their disciples, and makes preachers, as she makes poets, by inspiration, not by induction.

After J. S. Mill, the only other living champion of the Utilitarian school who demands special notice here is Professor BAIN. This subtle, various, and accomplished writer, while agreeing with Hume and Mill in reverting to the old Socratic principle of original benevolent instincts in man, and thus denying pure externalism in one important part of the human soul, is nevertheless upon the whole a much more thorough-going and consistent externalist than Mr. Mill ; so thorough, indeed, as not to have hesitated to assert, in the most unqualified language, that conscience in the breast is a mere reflection of the external model in the statute-book, instead of the statute-book being, as the Idealists teach, a very fragmentary and inadequate projection from the moral pattern in a normal conscience. This revival of Hobbism in one of its extreme forms is not likely to meet with much acceptance in a country where the popular conscience, from long centuries of combined Christian and chivalrous culture, has attained a very high degree of refined sensibility ; and the numerous admirers of Mr. Mill, who are grateful to that gentleman for the skill with which he has disposed the ethics of Empiricism in the drapery of Idealism, will scarcely be thankful to Mr. Bain for presenting their pet system in the naked prose of its early cradle. The acute northern professor would certainly have



been more consistent, though less amiable, if he had asserted in its broadest form the Hobbesian doctrine of an original war of all against all ; and he would have found no greater difficulty in evolving from the primeval tiger a Xavier or a Howard, than others have found in elevating the primeval monkey into a Newton or La Place.

We have now concluded our proposed survey of the Utilitarian philosophy, and the result may be summarily stated thus :—Utilitarianism generally is a method of thinking which, while professing to clear up dim ideas, brings confusion and disorder into every region of human thought and action ; and specially—

1. Which, by deriving thought from mere sensation, by deducing the one from the many, instead of the many from the one, and thus reducing mind to a mere blank impressibility, confounds the essential distinction between necessary and contingent truth, and renders all science impossible.

2. Which, by confounding causation with sequence, pulls up philosophy by the roots, disembowels theology of all substance, and freezes the breath of all natural piety.

3. Which, in the realm of the fine arts, for the harmonies and congruities of eternal reason, substitutes the arbitrary associations of ephemeral fashion, local habit, and individual conceit.

4. And which, in the all-important science of human life, degrades morality from a manifestation of true expression, pure emotion, and lofty purpose, into a low consideration and a slippery calculation of external consequences.

This may seem perhaps a sufficiently condemnatory sentence ; but it does not by any means follow

that Utilitarianism has proved utterly useless in the world, or that its power for good is exhausted. It is only as a philosophy of human thought, feeling, and action that it is weighed in the balance and found wanting; as an aspect of social morals, and in the hands of good men like Bentham and Mill, as an amiable half of moral truth giving itself out for the whole, it has done good service in its day, and may be expected to do more. No man certainly can quarrel with the zealous endeavour to promote the greatest happiness of the greatest number, provided it be made clear, in the first place, wherein human happiness and the true dignity of human nature consists. And though thinking men abroad, who take a cosmopolitan review of our insular sects and parties, will continue to look upon Paleyism and Benthamism as only the natural rank product of the unweeded garden of Locke's empiricism, practical men in this country, who are more politicians than philosophers, and more anxious to reform their institutions than to remodel their thinking, will continue to find in the Utilitarian principle a useful war-cry against traditional abuses, and a motto of which no lover of his kind requires to be ashamed. Scientific men also working correctly with Baconian tools on the forces of the external world, may be ready to ally themselves with a system of ethical philosophy which professes to make no assumptions, to proceed by cautious induction, and to educe the rule of right not from dim feelings, flaming passions, and lofty aspirations, but from statistical tables and other externalities that can be felt and fingered. As a practical power, therefore, in this country, Utilitarianism cannot be considered as extinct; on the

contrary, the recent upheaval of the democratic element which Whigs and Tories have conspired to produce, cannot but carry along with it, for a season, the glorification of that maxim which so felicitously seems to foretell the doom of all aristocratic privilege and oligarchic abuse. To deal with men in one gregarious mass, counting them only by units without respect to quality, seems characteristic no less of Benthamite philosophy than of democratic policy; the element of NUMBER is made prominent in both; and both seem to aim at a sort of general level of social bliss which can be most easily attained by taking the superfluities from the few and dividing them amongst the many. The heretical and anti-theological tendencies of the age also, will aid the Utilitarian movement; partly, no doubt, because theologians have not always sufficiently considered that a clean cottage is sometimes as necessary for the well-being of a people as a clean conscience, and partly because those who find in the several creeds of Christendom ground of moral offence, may not be unwilling to welcome in the Utilitarianism of the present day an ethical system which jealously shuns the contagion of piety, and scarcely with a cold and distant reverence recognises God. But this manifest hostility to religion which so characteristically separates the modern Utilitarian writers from Locke and Hartley will in all probability be the first thing that shall cause a salutary reaction against them. For religion is as essential to human nature as poetry; and however violent men may attempt to stamp it out, or supercilious men to overlook it, or meagre men to deny it, it will always know to assert its own place, and ever the more powerfully from the void which

its absence has occasioned. With democracy, presenting as it does, from every point, the most flattering appeals to individual self-importance, the masses of men readily become intoxicated ; but from absolute irreligion, except in fits of social madness, they revolt, and stagger back from the brink of the black abyss which it reveals. The difficulties of the Church Articles may be removed by judicious pruning or happy inoculation ; but in Atheism there dwells no healing ; it is sheer emptiness and despair.



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